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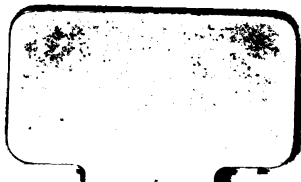
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THE
HEIR APPARENT:
A NOVEL.

BY THE LATE
MRS. GUNNING,
Author of *The Delborough Family, Memoirs of Mary, &c.*

REVISED AND AUGMENTED BY HER DAUGHTER,
MISS GUNNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

PRINTED FOR JAMES RIDGWAY, YORK STREET;
ST. JAMES'S SQUARE; AND W. D. SYMONDS,
N° 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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S. GOSNALL, Printer,
Little Queen Street, Holborn.

P R E F A C E.

[WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.]

PROBABLY the reader may recollect, that a book entitled, “*The Heir Apparent*,” was promised to the public by the late Mrs. Gunning, in an advertisement at the end of “*Fashionable Involvements*.”

She did not live many months after the publication of the latter work; yet, as the vigour of her intellects

never relaxed, she commenced her task in defiance of an agonizing disease, which increased daily; and she persisted, for she had as little need as any mortal living to compel her attention to fix itself on that country to which she was summoned. Her life, from her cradle to her grave, was a life of holiness: she had no new road to seek; she had ever kept the same undeviating path of piety: her heart knew no fears; and all within and without her was resignation and cheerfulness. Hence she probably would have completed her intention, had not her physicians positively commanded a cessation of all bodily exertions. She relinquished
the

the pen which had afforded her so much delight and comfort through the course of many years, with a portion of that ready acquiescence with which she ever resigned her own wishes, when incompatible with the ease of those around her. For herself, I may truly say, she had no care; pain nor sorrow never changed the cheering of her voice nor the soothing of her eye.

Surely the reader who possesses feeling, and only to such ought the honest mind to stand under judgment, surely that reader will not call this overflowing of a friend's heart impertinent and out of place! Just
praise

praise to the good, and a sketch of their character, cannot be out of place any where, much less when found in a species of writing which is regarded as a vehicle of morality. Besides, where is the man that dare, revel in delights, and shut his ear against the encomiast of his benefactor? Who then, when they take up "*The Heir Apparent*" with a view to receive pleasure or improvement, who, when they remember that it was planned and in part written by Mrs. Gunning, will regret the few moments which they consecrate to her memory? Her name, ever attended by the recollection of her virtues, hath already drawn me thus far,

far, without having fulfilled the task assigned me by her daughter.

When her mother died, Miss Gunning found in her bureau several unpublished copies of poems and plays, which are still in her possession; she also discovered the few sheets that were written of "*The Heir Apparent*;" and since that melancholy period having been repeatedly applied to for the manuscript, she at length resolved, as a mean of preserving even the smallest relics of her mother's mind, to finish the story, and give it to the world.

My

My young friend performed it under the influence of feelings that may be traced in the filial character which she hath drawn of the deceased Mrs. Doringfield. It was about that part of the book where she began ; and with a trembling hand and saddened heart, she followed the design of her dear parent now no more, as far as her memory could reach ; and where it failed, her own talents have filled up the vacuity.

THE

HEIR APPARENT.

HENRY Neville completed his travels with extraordinary advantages ; his mind was enriched with as much knowledge as can be gleaned from different courts by steady application, united to Nature's best capabilities, and aided by extensive cultivation, prior to the commencement of his residence abroad, which had been of very considerable dura-

VOL. I.

B

tion.

tion. At present we shall only add, by way of a more certain introduction to the world's favour, that he was the Earl of Ormington's second son; extremely handsome, extremely amiable; just arrived from Italy, and on the wings of duty, to console his widowed mother; to lament with her the death of his father; and to attend with fraternal affection his elder brother, who languished on the bed of sickness.

His long absence from the family had been occasioned more by a disappointment in love than by any other circumstance. Unfortunately, his early affections had been fixed on a
 young

young person so disagreeable to the Earl and Countess, that he must either give up his mistress or his parents: duty prevailed; and, to recompense him for the sacrifice, they not only permitted him to travel, and allowed him a very splendid appointment, but left him master of his own time and motions. To remain abroad happened to be his choice, because the first object of his passion was married, divorced, and remarried, in less than fifteen months after his departure.

Henry was received by his mother and brother as one risen from the dead. It was more than seven

B 2

years

years since they had last beheld him ; in which time his person, his mind, and his manners, had acquired so much strength, grace, and polish, as forced them to mingle with their caresses a portion of respect, seldom felt involuntarily, for a son and brother who has no claim to hereditary honours.

The Dowager Countess of Ormington had been a beauty, had been gay, we mean to say, innocently so ; had been attached a great deal to the world, but much more to the dignity of that rank she bore in the world, both by birth and marriage. Such had she been ; what she

she was at the return of Henry from Italy, presents quite a different picture ; her charms faded, her vivacity fled, the world forsaken ; nothing remaining of her former self but the stalk from which the last rose-leaf had fallen ; nothing of her former disposition but family pride, a prolific weed well known for making the most rapid progress in minds dissatisfied or uncultivated. It was not to the latter this abundant increase can be ascribed ; Lady Ormington being one of the best bred women of quality to be seen in this age of all-polished nobility ; but dissatisfied she had been from her cradle, which internal torment se-

veral domestic occurrences had produced real or imaginary causes for augmenting.

Before Lord Beauchamp succeeded to the title of his father he seldom visited the heavy walls of *Stately Castle*, a nickname given to the retirement of the Peer and Peerefs by their little neighbours. Little people are sometimes prodigiously daring; for, if they happen to move in the circle of gentility, they presume to think themselves entitled to politeness even from princes, and have the audacity to lift up their heads against those who would tread upon their necks.

Never did his Lordship augment the vanity of his parents, by putting them in mind of that honour which they particularly derived from his virtues, except he applied to them as financiers, who had the ways and means always before them ; and only when the occasion was extremely urgent did he even then solicit their assistance in person. He loved town, he loved its pleasures, and he loved its vices ; he was good-humoured, he was tender-hearted, and he was not proud ; he had many friends, as good-humoured, as tender-hearted as himself ; he had the most happy as well as the most simple method of accumulating friends, and of knowing

how to keep them; he would do any man a favour, but he would ask a favour of no man. Whoever would acquire a multitude of friends, to such we recommend his Lordship's mode of making and retaining them.

During the illness which preceded the death of his father, Lord Beauchamp, from duty, decency, necessity, or some such motive, left his soul in London, and whirled his body down to Stately Castle, in a phaeton and six blood mares, where, in the recesses of solitude, he anxiously waited, we do not say for the release of his father, but for his own, from a state of purgatory.

Whether

Whether the sedentary gloom in which he was now enveloped, the sombre hue of the surrounding objects, the daily ceremonious visits of four physicians, or the arrival of that tyrant whose approach they solemnly announced, made our proud Lord sad with regret, or sick with apprehension, may not easily be ascertained ; but he certainly began to droop before the Earl was gathered to his ancestors ; and his disorder afterwards increased with so much rapidity, that those very gentlemen of the faculty who had passed sentence on the father, were not more merciful in denouncing the fate of the son. However, they were too well bred, not to

keep that opinion to themselves, rather than disturb his peace, or the repose of his mother, by officiously declaring what it might not be pleasant for them to hear : and really in a land where all are philosophers, these sons of science would have no excuse, if they were to give their patients the trouble of preparing for a country not to be found in the maps of modern philosophy.

Henry had heard, and, what is rather extraordinary, heard with concern, that his brother was giving him a good chance for the Earldom ; and, though prepared to meet him not in perfect health, he was shocked to find him

him almost reduced to a skeleton ; but felt some degree of comfort at being assured by his own feeble voice, that he should cheat the doctors, and soon set out for the capital ; whither he invited our hero, with true brotherly kindness, to accompany him, promising, on that condition, to shew him a score of free British beauties, such as should make him forget all the Signoras to whom he had undoubtedly been attached in the course of his travels. A great deal more he might have uttered in the same strain, if a long, hollow, consumptive cough had not interrupted his mirth, at least for the present.

Lord Ormington was the favourite of his mother ; she would not suffer herself to suppose, that, being essential to her happiness, he could possibly be ravished from her by a decree of Providence ; therefore she was satisfied that he would do extremely well by means of air, exercise, and asses milk : nay, so firmly did she link hope and certainty together, that when he should have turned his thoughts from this world to another, she proposed to him several families of the first rank, either of which he might marry into, without degradation to his own.

Her Ladyship was also extremely
fond

fond of Henry ; she regarded him as the collateral security for retaining those honours dearer to her than existence ; she respected him, because he had once made to his family a sacrifice, which, in the rage of disappointed passion, threatened to destroy him ; she loved him for his tender duty to herself, and for the unfeigned ardent affection he had on all occasions, from infancy to manhood, testified for his brother.

That stupendous edifice, where the once lovely Countess had buried her poor shattered remains of beauty, bore a name so applicable to its situation, that in pure justice it ought to,
superse

superfede the borrowed one of Stately Castle; it was then called Bellevue. Nature never did more, nor Art less, than for the embellishment of this enchanting spot. The building, like its owners, sacrificed taste to magnificence; heavy and gloomy its walls, heavy and gloomy its inhabitants; within, the palace of Melancholy; without, the garden of Eden. To intelligent minds, there is captivity in such scenes as the environs of the castle afforded: Henry's mind was more than intelligent; it was enlarged; it was that human mirror in which the works of God are reflected to advantage; and he was captivated. He wished his mother and his brother to partake

partake of his sensations ; but the one was too great to profit by little objects, the other too much an invalid ever to go beyond the pleasure-ground, and then only boxed up in a close carriage.

The second morning after his arrival, whilst breakfasting by the couch of his brother, Henry asked him concerning the health and situation of many families and individuals whom he had faithfully treasured in his memory. The first and most cherished of this selection was his former tutor, a clergyman of infinite worth, under whose roof he had passed some years, not less to his satisfaction than improvement.

provement. He heard with inexpressible pleasure, that the good man had risen in the church; that his preferment was considerable; "And," added my Lord, "I understand by my rascal," meaning his valet, "that the old fellow lives like a gentleman, in the same house where thou didst board with him, when he fed thee high on the crumbs of Greek and Latin; mere trash, for which I had no relish."

The residence of this respectable ci-devant governor was still in the village of Ashbourn, a favourite feature in the map of Derbyshire, and situated within the distance of a morning.

ing ride from Bellevue. Henry, perhaps, would have said, he should see it on the morrow, if the awful presence of his awe-inspiring mother had not called off his attention from friendship, that it might be devoted at the shrine of duty. "Good Heaven!" cried the Countess, feeling the sick man's pulse through her black gloves, "Mr. Neville, what have you been saying to my Lord Ormington? what has raised his passions? why, his pulse are prodigiously quicker than when I left him last night."—"We have been talking of nothing, my dear mother," replied Henry, "that could possibly agitate my brother; I was asking
after

after some of my old friends ; and though his answers gave me satisfaction, yet our conversation has been so short, that I may reasonably suppose it has not occasioned him the smallest fatigue.”—“ No, by G—,” exclaimed my Lord, with a stout heart, but weak articulation ; “ on the contrary, yours is the only comfortable face I have blessed my eyes with since I came to this cursed country, which, with your leave, Madam——” He ceased speaking for several minutes, and the violence of his cough covered his brow with the dew-drops of debility. The Countess threw him her own handkerchief, bidding him use that to revive his spirits,

spirits, having just impregnated it with otto of roses, to take away the smell of her woman's fingers, as she said, who had presented it without a salver ; upon which the poor little lordling bursts into a fit of laughing almost as alarming as his fit of coughing, though it seemed to give the Countess peculiar satisfaction, because she regarded it as a symptom of amendment.

Breath being restored to my Lord, and serenity to his blinded mother, he began to join, in the best manner he was able, the thread of that eloquent harangue which had been broken by his first seizure ; declaring
his

his intentions of leaving the infernal country, where formality, want of society, and a host of doctors, who had done themselves the pleasure of making him sick, only that they might do themselves the credit of making him whole, were all in combination against his ever getting better, as long as he could be kept a prisoner at Stately Castle. The offended Dowager coloured scarlet deep at the appellation of Stately Castle; it was a term of meanness, it proceeded from the *canaille*, which made its native contempt still more contemptible: but whatever were her Ladyship's feelings, on hearing such an application of it from the lips of her son, he was

was too much inflamed to fear reproach ; she even thought him too ill for contradiction ; so wisely putting a cork on the corrosives of her mind, she only poured from between her teeth the anodyne of flattering hope ; saying, that he would soon be able to travel without any inconvenience, being certainly much better for the change of air. “ I would rather endure the air of a furnace,” replied his Lordship, panting for respiration, “ than banish myself any longer from convivial society ; so you may expect I shall soon be off, Madam. Henry shall go with me, and in six months I will undertake to make him as joyous a fellow as myself ;

myself; he has too much of the family complexion for a good companion; I know how to give him the polish of ton." This was a long speech, and he did not rest until he coughed at the end of it.

Henry, who saw and felt the dangerous situation to which his brother was reduced, experienced a considerable shock at the little he seemed to know of it himself; and, to stop the progress of his present levity, he asked his mother if she had any commands for Ashbourn, as he intended to take a ride there early the next morning, and, if possible, return to dinner, or, at least, soon after.

The

The same reason which made her throw a rein over her passion at the offence given by his brother, did not exist in the case of Henry ; and she signified her surprise, in no very conciliatory accents, at his finding any occasion to leave the seat of his ancestors for a whole day, or even for an hour, to visit any trumpery village, inhabited by a parcel of trumpery plebeians ; then added, “ Pray, Mr. Neville, may I presume to inquire, which of them is to have the honour of entertaining the second son of the nineteenth Earl of Ormington ? ” Henry, who knew and pitied the infirmities of his mother, replied with meekness, that he intended

tended to call upon Mr. Doringfield.

“ I think, Sir,” retorted the Countess, “ my Lord Ormington, your father, has sufficiently paid the wages of his servants, without reducing you to the extreme meanness of keeping them company.” Henry, smiling, bowed to his mother, turned upon his heel, and withdrew ; by which manœuvre he preserved his moderation, his principles, and his filial respect.

At an early hour the next morning, mounting his horse, attended by a groom, he set his face towards Ashbourn ; the distance was little more than five miles ; he was in no
haste

haste to pass them over ; every tree, every shrub, every thicket, he saluted as his ancient acquaintance. His heart overflowed with kindness for all the works of Nature, animate or inanimate, which had in any measure contributed to his improvement or his pleasures. The well-remembered spots, where he had so often ranged in the days of his infancy, first excited the emotions of that gratitude which was perfected when he stopped at the door of his revered governor ; but as he must enter the house through a garden, by that path we choose to attend him. Over this small portion of ground Flora had scattered her flowers, and

Pomona her fruits; whilst the streams of clear water which ran upon a bed of shining spar, added brilliance to their colours, sweetness to their odours, and increased their vegetation. Henry arriving at this rivulet, did homage to its remembrance by falling on its green bank, and exclaiming, “ Oh! how often, when my lips have been parched with the burning heat of summer, hast thou parted with thy liquid treasures to support my fainting strength!” The sound of an harp put an end to his effusions; he started up, and pursued it to the back of a rural bower, whence the strains proceeded, and where he could listen without

giving any interruption to the performance. He had not long possessed his station, when the harmony which drew him thither, being united to the vocal powers of a female voice, softer, sweeter than any he had ever heard, even in the famed land of melody, rooted him to the spot in a sort of frantic fascination, while she warbled in Italian a morning hymn to the beneficent God of Nature. The pleasure of Henry was mixed with surprise. The first pause she made, he began to reflect what degree of relationship this accomplished musician could stand in to the good man for whom his visit was intended ; it certainly could not

be his daughter, because, when he commenced his travels, Doringfield had no child. He then thought, that perhaps, his former amiable wife being dead, he might have married another; and if his soul had been formed for the admittance of envy, no object was so likely to have excited it as a domestic companion, whose talents and piety outsoared the highest of his almost romantic ideas. His reflections were interrupted, and his attention redoubled, by these words, from a voice which seemed to be that of an infant : “ Dear Miss Arundel, how pretty that is ! will you teach it to me ? ” — “ Yes, my love, when your hands are large enough to compass

pass the harp.”—“ Then do make them grow big very soon ! ”—“ Neither I, nor any body else, can do that, my Lydia ; it, in a great measure, depends on your own endeavours.”—“ How can I make them grow ? ”—“ By loving God, the Creator of this beautiful garden, of the sky which covers it, of the sun which warms it. The same God made you, and me, and all the world ; it is only Himself that can enlarge our limbs, or increase our understanding ; therefore, if you desire to grow bigger, or wiser, you must love him with all your heart, do every thing to please, and nothing to offend him.”—“ Is God good-

natured, like Mr. Doringfield, or will he be very angry, and scold, like grandmamma?" — "There is no man who can bear any comparison with God; He only is perfect; all whom He has made are subject to faults; but Mr. Doringfield is as good as he can possibly be." — "I am sure, then, I shall love God, and please him too, if you will tell me every day what I am to do; but pray now do sing that song about me and the snowdrop; I dreamed of it all night, and you said you would sing it again this morning."

Henry panted with impatience; the sweet invisible songstresses swept
her

her fingers over the strings of her harp, and these words accompanied the seraphic sounds of her voice and instrument :

SONG.

I.

The snowdrop peeps its cheerful head,
Fair harbinger of spring,
And modest droops to shun the blast
The ices of March may bring.

II.

Just so the nymph, in beauty's prime,
Should seek the sacred shade ;
Just know the world, and then retire
Where folly can't invade.

III.

The humble lily of the vale
Excites more fond desire
Than the bold sunflower's gaudy blaze,
That courts meridian fire.

IV.

If modesty and heaven-born truth,
My dear, thy life attend,
Thy face, illumin'd by their aid,
Shall charm to Nature's end.

“Divine! absolutely divine!”whispered the heart of Henry, when the song was ended ; but before the partial critic could form another thought, he was put into fresh tumults, produced by new causes. Again the sweet minstrel lifted her strains from the
simple

simple to the sublime; again her lofty notes ascended to the Heaven of Heavens, to the Kings of Kings. Piety has no tongue, it is the soul of all languages; and in Italian, she prayed with beautiful fervour, that God would establish virtue in the bosom of this innocent little creature, and guard her from the fate of her deluded, her unfortunate mother.

The prayer offered up, the subject of her petition, the awful but melancholy tones of her voice, first suggested, and afterwards confirmed, to Henry, that this wretched creature must be a pensioner of Mr. Doringfield's, who, reclaimed from

the paths of vice, had become the object of his compassion, and of his protection. He sighed, that a star so bright should ever have fallen; he honoured the hand which tried to replace it in the regions of virtue, if not with its native lustre, at least superior to the station into which error had plunged it.

With such thoughts as these, and cursing the seducer of her innocence, he turned from a scene where he had experienced extreme pain, as well as excess of pleasure, and without being discovered, proceeded to the house. He was received by its hospitable owner with the most genuine marks of

of affection, and by him presented to his wife, as also to a most lovely young girl, her daughter by a former husband. Miss Dormer struck Henry, at first sight, as the most beautiful dark woman he had ever beheld, for it was not his favourite complexion. She was remarkably neat, very elegantly, but very simply dressed. Henry would never have looked twice on the finest female figure in the world, whose taste had not been directed by simplicity. She was embroidering at a frame, and shewed to advantage an arm rounded by the Graces. Henry, without being really captivated by such an assemblage of beauty, had so much the ap-

pearance of soon commencing her lover, that, in less time than some mothers take in choosing a filk, Mrs. Doringfield had chosen a husband for her daughter ; whom she modestly hoped, from certain circumstances circulated in regard to Lord Ormington's true situation, to see a Countess, and mistress of Bellevue Castle.

Every sort of refreshment was produced by this notable manager, to impress Henry with a favourable idea of her domestic qualifications, and to make him eager to possess a wife of her bringing up ; for she remembered to have heard it said, that none but a fool would take any man's daughter

daughter before he had examined into the character of her mother; and in general, the maxim may be a good one. Henry would only take a cup of chocolate, and might have even declined that, if, in consequence of a command from Mrs. Doringfield, it had not been presented by the hands of Miss Dormer. From hands so white, who but a stoic would have refused the smallest offering? Henry took the cup, and pressed the fingers which had retained it. Every thing he saw, every thing he heard, augmented his surprise; for it must not be called love, except by Mrs. Doringfield, who would not believe it could be any thing less, which made
the

the HEIR APPARENT admire the beauty, and smile at the wit of her Lavinia.

In the mean time, the thoughts of Henry were as much, or perhaps more, occupied by the object absent, than the object present: could she, too, be the daughter of his old friend's wife? could the sweet songstress be equal in beauty to the fair embroiderer? was she, or was she not, the mother of that infant whom she was directing in its road to heaven? for it was now that he began to waver in his opinion respecting her situation in Mr. Doringfield's family. Whilst asking these questions of himself, and answering them very much

to

to his own satisfaction, their course was interrupted by the many inquiries his late governor made concerning his travels; to all of which he replied with that sort of embarrassed negligence a man naturally falls into, who is talking of one thing and thinking of another. The lady and her harp filled every vacancy in his imagination, yet did not hinder him from sometimes speaking to Lavinia in tones so impressive, sometimes looking at her with glances so impassioned, as could not escape the observation of herself, her mother, or her stepfather; every one of whom began to form plans according to their several propensities: by their fruits, you shall know them.

Henry,

Henry, who thought of his brother's invalid state, and feared the resentment of his mother, was putting an end to his visit, promising to renew it very frequently, and having made his bow to the ladies, was receiving their kindest wishes for Lord Ormington's speedy recovery, when he was thrown out of his purpose by the entrance of a young lady from the garden, followed by a little girl of four or five years old. He stopped short in the midst of his very last adieu, and without knowing what he was about, reseated himself, as did his hospitable entertainers: but his senses soon returned, when the beautiful vision that enveloped them, instead of joining
the

the family party, only passed through the room, without attracting the smallest notice. She bowed gracefully to Henry's profound obeisance; for he had again risen to salute her; but, alas! she was vanished like a ghost, who, it is said, will never speak till spoken to. Not a tongue moved, but the eyes of all were instantly turned on our disappointed hero, who said, with as much carelessness as it was in his power to assume, "That young lady, I suppose, is governess of the most beautiful child I ever beheld?"—"No, my dear Sir," replied Mr. Doringfield, "you are mistaken; she is perfectly independent; I am her guardian;

guardian ; her person, her fortune, and her education, were intrusted to my charge by a deceased parent, whom I truly loved ; and I hope the fidelity with which I execute my trust, will evince the sincerity of my professions."

Henry, in the midst of his confusion, could not help observing some fly glances that passed between the mother and daughter, and naturally concluded he had given birth to them by the fickleness of his own movements. He blushed at the detection, and would have renewed his audience of leave, if the child had not reappeared ; but she came alone ; yet it was

was possible she might soon be followed ; he therefore kept his seat. The little Lydia advanced with hilarity towards him, invited by his smiling countenance, as much as by the motion of his hand, which was held out as a signal for her approach. She ran to his knees, looked in his face, told him he was a very pretty gentleman, and asked him if he knew who made him. Henry, who saw her full of the lecture she had been receiving in the arbour, answered in the strain of her instructress, at the same time kissing her cheek, " Yes, my dear, both you and I know very well, that it was God who made us."—" So Miss

Arundel

Arundel says ; and that he made grandmamma too.”--“ Have done,” cried the tender parent, whom she addressed by that title. “ Pardon me, Madam ! the young lady is extremely intelligent ; do not throw a damp on the ardour of our beginning friendship.—And so, my little love, you have some kind person to whom you are indebted for all your knowledge?”—“ No, indeed, she is not a poor person, but a very fine lady, who can play upon the harp ; and so shall I too, when God makes my hands a little bigger ;” looking upon them, and pulling them with impatience. “ I presume, then, you are very fond of this fine lady, who
takes

takes the trouble to give you such good instructions?"—" Oh yes ! I do love her with all my heart ; and so would you, if you could see how good-natured she is, how pretty she looks, and how well she does every thing." He now caught her in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom. Mr. Doringfield smiled, and, from some hidden cause, tears started to his eyes. The glances of the ladies became more mysterious ; Henry's embarrassments increased ; he rose, for the last time, to make his adieus ; Lydia, hanging round his knees, joined her little voice in the general petition, that he would come to see them soon, and very often.

Henry

Henry walked back to the inn, where he had dismounted; Mr. Doringfield would have attended him, but he waved the compliment, knowing the regularity of his family hours; and would by no means break in upon them, after having refused the most pressing invitations to dinner. His horses were just finishing the last of their feed when he entered the court; and, having spoken to his groom, he fauntered into a small garden belonging to the house, where he saw, on the gravel walk, an old woman wheeling herself in a sort of vehicle, constructed after the model of those chairs, which, for the accommodation of decrepit invalids, are so frequently
 seen

seen on the Parades of Bath. Our hero, entranced in his own reflections, might probably have passed by this, to him (who had been so long from his country) extraordinary equipage, without observation, if there had not been something in the physiognomy of its owner, which would have arrested the steps of a Lavater. They met in the centre of the walk; he touched his hat, and said, “ You have a fine morning, Madam, for your solitary excursion.” She stopped her carriage, and replied, with equal civility, “ You see, Sir, I am making the most of it; but if I had the use of my limbs, as you have, I should hardly confine my excursions to a space
so

so limited.”—“ Have you met with any accident, Madam ? ”—“ No, Sir ; and, perhaps, I bear my restraint with less reluctance, because I have borne it from my cradle ; I was there struck with the palsy ; I am now turned of sixty ; I have never known the pleasure of standing or walking ; and with good health, good spirits, together with enough of genius to amuse and support me, I have no reason to repine at Providence for one single visitation.”—“ You are a very wonderful philosopher,” replied Henry ; “ do you live at this inn ? ”—“ My relations are the owners of it ; but that small room on the opposite side of the court is my residence ; they send

me my dinner; at evening I wheel to the house, into which they carry me in their arms; and when I have supped with them, they convey me back in the same manner."—"I should like to visit your apartment," said Henry; "I have a few moments to spare; allow me to attend you thither."

It was a benevolent proposal. The pleasure and profit she derived, by her own account, from the exertions of genius, made him hope to find something or other to purchase, which, without offending her pride, might add a little to her comfort. Already she had turned the screw of

her chair, and having entered her recess together, she shewed him a thousand curiosities, many of which he bought, but not till he had made certain conditions, that he should have them at his own price; with the liberty of leaving his purchases there, till he should call or send for them; which if it was not convenient for him to do in a fortnight, she might apply them to any other purpose: then wrapping five guineas in a paper, he laid it on a table, saying, "There is your money; but you must count it, Madam, after I am gone; for I have such pleasure in your conversation, that I will not agree to lose a moment of it."

There

There was so much good sense, so much grace, in this extraordinary woman, that she was in no manner at a loss to return his politeness ; and when he inquired if she knew Mr. Doringfield's family ? “ I know none of them,” she replied, “ except Miss Arundel, whose angel face is ever to be seen in the abode of poverty ; she is found lingering there, even after hope itself has deserted it.” — “ Have you long known this young lady ?” asked Henry. “ I have never had the honour of speaking to her at any time, Sir ; yet I see her when she does not see me ; and I hear her spoken of when she does not suppose herself the subject of conversation ;

tion ; she seeks neither admiration nor fame ; yet all who see will admire, and all who hear will praise."

The groom came to tell his master the horses were ready : he looked at his watch, it was later than he imagined ; he hastily wished the philosophical cripple a good day, mounted, and galloped off with one lady in his head, and two in his heart ; his mother occupied the former, Miss Arundel and Miss Dormer the latter. Henry returned to Bellevue just as the bell had rung for dinner ; it was too late to make any alteration in his dress, too early to expect his mother in the drawing-room ; and he directly
went

went to his brother's apartment, where sat the Countess with an open letter in her hand, in deep conversation with her eldest son, who said, at the moment Henry entered, " I desire, Madam, to hear no more of this business, until I am wanted." His head rested on the arm of the sofa, but the voice of Henry roused him ; he rose up, shook him affectionately by the hand, told him he could not have come at a better time, for that he was heartily tired with the damned dull subject of matrimony ; the Dowager replied, " But you know, my Lord, it is a necessary one."

Here dinner was announced ; and as long as the servants attended, nothing more was said upon the topic so offensive to his Lordship's patience. Lady Ormington appeared in better humour than common ; she had even the condescension to ask how the old parson did ; adding, " I hope there are no artful misses belonging to him, that will be spreading their nets for any sons of mine." It is uncertain what Henry's answer might have been ; fortunately, his brother drew off her attention, by finding fault with every dish at the table, though, in fact, it was only to be found in his own debilitated appetite ; and by the time his grumblings

grumblings were appeased, her Ladyship seemed to have forgotten the misses, and their nets ; nor was there any open moment for renewing the question during the remainder of that day.

After the servants had placed the dessert, and were withdrawn, the Dowager, taking out the diamond pin which fastened her handkerchief, stuck the point through a fine fresh-looking raspberry, and presenting it to the panting Peer, hoped he would eat it, because it exactly represented the beautiful colour that ornamented the cheeks of Lady Georgiana ;
 “ Then I will not touch it, by G—,”

cried my Lord. " And pray why not ?"—" Because, if it is the representative of a fine lady's complexion, it must be contaminated with paint, and may add the pains of poison to the *ennui* of your Ladyship's lecture."—" I am sorry to hear your Lordship talk so lightly on a subject so serious," replies the Dowager, drawing up her head ; " if the Earl, your father, had been as dilatory with me, you might not have represented his family, or possessed his honours."—" Do you think then, I should not have made my way into the world, supposing your Ladyship had not married my father ? Were there not a thousand grasping for husbands, and coronets

coronets then, as there are now ?"—

" But *I lost*, my Lord, when I exchanged the rank of a Duke's daughter to take that of a Countess."—" Who loses, or who wins, Madam, is perfectly indifferent to a by-stander ; but a man should not have the dice forced upon him when he is disinclined to run any risk for the stake."—" And what risk is it possible you can run with such a wife as Lady Georgiana Crawford ?"—" Oh, many very probable ones."—" Name something in particular, my Lord Ormington ; general reflections are by no means conclusive."—" I do not like her old quiz of a father ; his avarice is so great, that unless I

starve my children he would call me spendthrift. I do not like her mother, she is damned artful : her eyes are like the sun ; no flower of nobility can escape them, and a man is sure to be popped into her family, whether with or without his consent. I do not like her long generation of quality aunts and cousins, of which a list is given at full length in the newspapers whenever she has ensnared a pigeon in her net.”—“ Well, my Lord,” cried his mother, half smiling, but impatiently interrupting him, “ you certainly can have no objection to the lady herself ? ”—“ No very particular one ; and if I must marry a coquette, she may do as well
as

as another. However, Madam, I repeat what I told you before, that till I am wanted to finish this family concern, I desire to be relieved entirely from the subject."—"Your Lordship may depend on my giving you as little trouble as possible, yet some attentions on your part must distinguish Lady Georgiana, when my Lord Gifford brings her to make you a visit."—"Rather say, when he comes to take me in; and persuade me to sit down with him at sixpenny cassino: his experience at that low play is well enough known; he has disposed of one daughter already at the game: curse me, if I turn over a pack of cards with the spectacled old

lycophant for less than hundreds !”
 —“ Your Lordship seems inclined to
 be abusive.” —“ I am more inclined,
 Madam, to sleep away the fumes of
 dinner : your venison was too new ;
 it sits heavy on my stomach.” --“ Mr.
 Neville,” said the Countess to Henry,
 who, from not understanding the
 subject, had taken no share in the
 conversation, but sat with astonish-
 ment in his face, and a book in his
 hand, listening to this scheme of
 marrying up a man who had already
 more than one foot in the grave ;
 “ Mr. Neville, have the goodness to
 assist your brother, who wishes to
 retire ; and when he has no further
 use

use for you, meet me in the drawing-room."

The gentlemen retired together; my Lord, who rested on the shoulder of Henry, turning round as they went out at the door, asked his mother, why she could not make herself contented with the present *Heir Apparent*; adding, that, for his part, he did not desire a better, and heartily wished she would adopt his opinion. The brothers separated no more during the evening; of course, that conference the Dowager seemed to have demanded with Henry was deferred to another opportunity.

At

At the departure of our hero, Mrs. Doringfield, having ordered that dinner should be immediately served, observed to her husband, first, that she had never seen Lavinia look so *well*; secondly, with a smile of complacency, that Mr. Neville was a charming young man; and lastly, that it seemed mighty odd, nay mighty providential, that he should have taken such a fancy to the little Lydia.—“Nature is all-sufficient, my dear.”—“Indeed I am not quite of your opinion, Mr. Doringfield; the liberalities of Nature, without the polish of education, lose half their attractions.”—“The child is well enough,

enough, in both these respects ; for she inherits the charms of her mother ; and my ward Alicia will teach her how to improve them by a virtuous conduct."

Lavinia coloured, her mamma looked pale ; it was in both, though of different shades, the livery of disappointment. " You very much mistake my meaning," cried the enraged lady to her serene consort ; " I was neither talking of your ward, the ill-fated child, nor my poor lost daughter ; no, Mr. Doringfield, I have no room for such sort of people in my thoughts ; I have one jewel, thank God, uncontaminated ; her only I shall

shall cherish ; in the union of whose personal and mental accomplishments, even you, Sir, by your connexion with us, may, if it is not your own fault, reap both honour and advantage.”—“ My dear Rebecca, why put yourself in a passion ?” replied the tranquil divine ; then added, taking the hand of his daughter-in-law, “ Lavinia, you must not let the partial praise of your fond mother inspire you with vanity ; that canker-eating foe to pure beauty. I allow you are handsome ; I believe you are good ; and I hope to see you married to a husband who shall be your *equal* in every thing.” Miss drew her hand from his with an air of silent contempt ;

tempt ; her mother encouraged her by a nod and a smile, which seemed to say, “ *We shall be too much for him ;*” but the appearance of Alicia Arundel, which was soon followed by that of a leg of lamb, green peas, ducks, and a parson’s pudding, put a stop to every thing that had any semblance, however remote, to confidential chit-chat. They all took their places at table ; three, with real, two, with affected good humour ; a respectable majority, as times go, on the side of upright heartedness.

Mr. Doringfield, having made a second election, did not consult either his eyes, his ears, or his passions, in choosing

choosing a wife ; he was chiefly directed by the fatherly affection with which he regarded the amiable daughter of his deceased friends ; it was much less for his own sake than for hers, that he prevailed on himself to marry. The charming woman who presided over his family left at her death a vacancy in his heart, as well as in his domestic economy ; the former, he did not expect would be ever filled, it being as difficult to find two wives precisely formed for the same situation, as by chance to pick up two pictures made on purpose to fit one frame ; it was a much easier matter to provide a lady who would bear his name, grace his table,

table, manage his servants, and *chaperone* his ward.

In looking round his neighbourhood for a female of this description, he cast his eyes on the widow Dormer, to whom he had paid several consolatory visits, on the double occasion of her eldest daughter's seduction and death, just as she had brought into the world that little Lydia, whose attractions for Henry were so strongly remarked by Mrs. Doringfield as mighty providential; and drew from her husband the laconic reply, that Nature was all-sufficient. To explain the meaning of these dark sayings, it is only necessary to declare, that

that Lord Ormington, then Lord Beauchamp, on one of his financiering excursions to Bellevue, had amused the tedious hours of solitude, first in gaining the affections, and afterwards in seducing the honour, of an innocent, beautiful girl, whose life became the sacrifice of her imprudence.

Mrs. Dormer, at the time his Lordship's acquaintance commenced with her daughter, was the widow of a worthy, but indigent officer, whose fortune consisted of a pension from Government, a small house, and small garden, a few acres of meadow ground just enough to subsist two cows, who gratefully, in return, more than

then half supported her family. Necessity had taught her economy, but pride would hardly admit her to the free usage of it; at least, as far as appearances would go, in her own dress, and that of the young ladies, she had nothing to do with the saving system. . . Abroad, every thing was in style; at home, every thing was scanty; except she could have the felicity of entertaining people of fashion, which sometimes happened, from her former connexion with the great world; for though she had not basked in the sunshine of high life, she had been whipped through it in the shape of a lame Countess's tead-eater. . . The fold of her mind was not

more flexible than prolific ; nor were artifice and meanness the only crops it produced ; many feeds of ambition had crept in amongst them, which her marriage with the son of her Ladyship's steward, and the rank of a captain's lady, called forth to vegetation ; and so rapid was their growth, as almost to overrun all her other qualifications. It is rather unlucky, that a passion so exalted should, as is too often the case, be the destruction of its possessor : we make this remark, because it is difficult to attribute the fall of Miss Dormer to any other original source, than the extreme assiduity of her mother to attract the notice and engage the visits of Lord Beauchamp,

Beauchamp, after it came to her knowledge that he had been heard to swear by his Maker, that Miss Lydia was a finer woman than the Dutchess of —.

It is no hard matter to bring people together who are willing to meet. The widow inveigled this noble admirer to her house, where all her plans succeeded, except that the trifling formality of a marriage ceremony was omitted; not owing to any negligence of her own; on the contrary, it was the honourable foundation on which she intended to build the magnificent structure of family aggrandizement: whose fault it was,
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in such cases, is not easily determined. The accidental overthrow of this feeble basis brought shame and confusion on herself, disgrace and death on her daughter. Week after week, month after month, Mrs. Dörmer concealed her blushes within the walls of retirement; either venting execrations on the Peer; admiring the charms of that child which still remained unruffled; or, perhaps, in forming new stratagems, how to dispose of them honourably, and to advantage. Whatever was the nature of her employments from the time of poor Lydia's interment, the neighbours sent compliments, and called in vain at the door of her cottage;

tage. She was a lady much versed in the ways of the world; and suspected their inquiries, personal, or by message, were not entirely composed of genuine kindness, but a good deal mixed with curiosity, a little envy, and more of malice than either. It was nothing but her extensive knowledge of modern customs in the higher circles, that could have led her into what, by that very circumstance, happened to be an error; the inhabitants of a country village being very unlike courtly dwellers in many respects; and when these rustics did send, or carry their inquiries, it was actually with the benevolent design of knowing how she supported her

heavy affliction, as well as to administer consolation to her wounded dignity, by shewing her a double portion of respect. Mr. Doringfield lived but a few miles from the disconsolate widow: he, like the rest of her kind neighbours, felt real compassion for the family misfortune, without considering, or even surmising, that it came, in one way, by her own invitation. The truth is, if she had not been ambitious, her daughter might have continued virtuous.

Mrs. Dormer inherited another propensity peculiar to great people, the love of popularity; which she laboured

laboured to obtain, by a servile kind of condescension, accommodated to all humours, all ranks, and even to no rank at all: her powers in this science were, by education, without limitation; and for her insincere professions, she gained so many sincere friends, who were ready to give their good word, that it is no wonder Mr. Doringfield should fix on this lady as the successor of his former wife. He heard of her seclusion from society, he thought it decent, and respected her accordingly. Unwilling to be turned off with the herd of unsuccessful visitors, after he had made up his mind to give his ward a woman of good breeding for her protectress,

he announced his purposed interview in a plain sensible letter, which gained him admittance, a flattering reception, and, in due time, the hand of the lady. Thus were the two most opposite families united in one; the preliminaries to this unexpected wedding were soon accommodated; every thing possessed by the bride he settled on her daughter, rejoicing that his beloved Alicia would be happy in a companion so agreeable, so every way suitable. Alas, poor man! he chose for her quite as well as for himself! what could the best of guardians do more? His own private fortune he gave to his wife for her life, should she happen to survive him, than which

which nothing was more likely, being at least twenty years his junior; reserving only to himself the power of bequeathing his estate in remainder, with the generous design of making a small provision for that unfortunate infant, whom Providence seemed to have thrown upon his protection; who received few smiles, and fewer caresses, from her *discreet* grandmother, and her *virtuous* aunt, who by chance had hitherto encountered no temptation, to render her otherwise.

As to the noble father of Lydia, he did not so much as know that he was a father; he had heard indeed, by

accident, as he was running his horses at Newmarket, that Miss Dormer was dead. This news being told him by a gentleman who had caught the sound in his journey from Buxton, without hearing of what disorder she died, and reaching his Lordship's ears just as his favourite racer had won the plate, he only replied, "She was a damned fine girl;" and perhaps never thought of her again.

Mrs. Dormer did not want spirit to feel the injuries of her daughter; but she wanted the independent spirit to shew her sense of them to those before whom she had been used to tremble; we do not mean Lord and
 Lady

Lady Ormington in particular; all lords and ladies, in the eyes of this humble binder of quality, were alike tremendous. She was not even acquainted with the magnificent owners of Bellevue; but from mere instinct she knew, that, if told of her misfortune, they would think their son had done her too much honour in seducing her daughter; and that she herself should become the object of their insult for the daring presumption of mixing her blood with that of their noble house. She had no pretensions to public restitution; she therefore determined to wait for private revenge the first open opportunity which seemed to offer. The sweetest

of all others presented itself in the form of Henry Neville, on that day when he so unexpectedly came to visit them; when Lavinia broke upon him in all her charms of real beauty, feigned simplicity, and decided resolution of letting no conquest escape her; when the looks of Henry first inspired both mother and daughter with the fire of hope, although a little extinguished by the distraction to which they suddenly changed, on seeing Alicia pass through the room, and the evident agitation with which he waited her return.

The seed of ambition is scattered in most hearts; and if the mind be
well

well cultivated, the fruit becomes noble, and answers the original; if not, it runs to weeds, and places the possessors upon a precipice, where, if prosperity carries them ever so little beyond their poise, it overturns and dashes them to pieces: thus it was with Mrs. Doringfield, when her lovely and once innocent child became a victim to the silly hopes of her mistaken mother; who, instead of giving lessons of vanity, should have instilled those of humility, which would have taught her, that virtue, not pedigree, can render a young woman either respectable, or happy; but pride, ambition, and their attendant avarice, had entire do-

minion in the soul of that woman, whom the respectable and worthy Doringfield had unfortunately selected as the person who was to succeed in his heart and house, his truly amiable, gentle, and lovely wife. Death had snatched her from his arms, while yet in the meridian splendour of her life. Never had affection been more fervent than that felt by this once happy pair ; and during the years they had been united, increasing happiness and increasing passion marked the time ; for every day new instances of tenderness, and more intimate knowledge of character, confirmed and augmented the enthusiasm of their hearts. There was

no

no wish of the one which the other did not strive to anticipate; and respect for each other's understanding prompted attention to each other's opinions: unbounded love was the parent of eternal peace; while unbounded friendship communicated every hope and fear.

Often did they say nothing could add to their happiness; and every hour presented to the affectionate wife some instance of still-increasing passion in her adoring husband; they laughed at the foolish opinions of the world, that those united in the marriage state must be tired of each other; and though in company they carefully

fully avoided that laboured fondness which disgusts, yet a penetrating eye might easily see, by certain unaffected attentions, and the mode in which little services were done, that they still were lovers.

Under the sheltering protection of Mrs. Doringfield had Alicia Arundel been brought forward ; and all those virtues, which in so great a degree adorned her beloved protectress, were equally visible in this fair, blooming branch, which, cropped from its parent tree, scarcely felt the loss she had sustained, whilst blessed with the paternal affection of this worthy pair. She had but just attained the
age

age of sixteen, when the adored wife, and respected friend, was snatched from a life of joy to the bosom of her Creator, who had spared her as an example of all that was praiseworthy in life, and now recalled her pure spirit to that heaven, where she would doubtlessly receive the reward of her active benevolence, and resignation to the will of that God she worshipped. Think what unmeasurable misery agonized the soul of him who almost worshipped her, when she vanished from the face of the earth, and was as those who had never been ! He was at first almost stupidly insensible ; but when rack-
ing torture roused him from that torpid

torpid state, if imagination can conceive the heart taken out, and torn afunder, while its miserable owner still survives, then, allowing for the superiority of mental torment, it may form some conception of the sufferings of Doringfield. He awoke as from a charming dream, a dream of long happiness to come, while many a year should glide away in peace and love; the ground had slipped from beneath his feet, and he saw nothing but an abyss into which he was to sink for ever. He traversed the lonesome rooms of his comfortable residence, where, in reading and in conversation, so many happy hours had glided away; or he threw himself
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in agony on that bed where peace and happiness had reposed.

Though the worthy man, for a time, thus suffered his feelings to get the better of that pious resignation he owed to the will of the Divine Being, who had blessed him so long with the possession of his now angel Fanny; he was conscious of the error into which his distraction had led him. At length he roused himself from his lethargy; and Time, that great physician, aided by Religion, allowed reason to operate. The violence of his sorrow mellowed into tender, but never-ceasing remembrance; and, in two years, his turn
for

for domestic life, and impatience of the gloom of solitude, made him gradually entertain a wish for having once more a residence enlightened by female society and domestic social comfort; for not being himself arrived at that period of life when the world ceases to regard our actions, he had, on the death of Mrs. Doringfield, placed the young and lovely Alicia with a relation who resided in London, where her education had been completed under the best masters the capital afforded. With the hope of again enjoying a happy home, he proposed marriage to the widow Dormer, and never was poor man more unfortunate in the choice
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of a companion. Indeed it is the fate of many to fail in actions undertaken from the best and most reasonable motives; but which, in the end, turn out widely contrary to what was hoped and expected. Thus it was with this good and respectable man, who soon became convinced of the striking contrast visible in those women to whom he had looked for happiness ! But, alas ! it was too late that he had made a discovery so detrimental to his repose; and all that now remained was for him to reconcile his mind to that fate he had put it out of his own power to avert.

In

In the course of a very few days the visit of Mr. Neville was repeated to the parsonage of Ashbourn, on his arrival he was informed the ladies were gone to Derby, and that Mr. Doringfield was attending the sick bed of a dying neighbour, but was expected to return in a short time: to this intelligence was added a respectful but warm invitation, that our hero would alight, and wait the entrance of his master, by an old man who had occupied the situation he still held in the family during those days when the youthful Henry was benefited by the instructions of his pious friend. In the hope of gaining some information respecting

the

the lovely Alicia, he alighted, and giving his horse to the care of old Daniel, bent his steps towards the garden, in which he intended to amuse himself till Mr. Doringfield had performed the duties which had taken him from home.

On going round to the back of the house, he beheld, seated in a bow window, which opened with folding glass doors on the lawn, the fair form of her who was the sole cause of his so quick return. From the winding of the path, and number of flowering shrubs with which it was thickly planted, he was not observed by Miss Arundel; and had
the

the gratification to view unnoticed the interesting little group which now presented itself. She was seated at a table, on which lay scattered several drawings, and was busily employed in sketching a likeness of the smiling Lydia; one white hand held the pencil, which the skill of an artist guided, while the other was thrown round the neck of the blooming girl, who, with all the artless fondness of youthful affection, was gazing on the lovely face of her sweet instructress with infantine eagerness and delight: throughout the apartment was visible an air of superior taste; the decorations were simply elegant; the walls covered with

with plain green paper, on which were placed, in compartments, the most beautiful drawings; between each of these hung small straw baskets filled with the freshest flowers; the drawings and glasses were wreathed by festoons of green leaves, formed to represent branches of laurel, which had a most novel and simple effect: the bookcases were peculiarly elegant, and ornamented in the same striking manner; whilst the pink net curtains, sofas, and chairs, cast over a white calico drapery, threw a most enchanting shade over the room, which indeed seemed a perfect fairy palace, and a fit abode for the lovely beings who then

then fascinated the heart and eyes of the before captivated Henry. And never surely was an object more calculated to inspire everlasting regard, than the attracting creature who, to the charms of beauty, added every virtue and accomplishment which could be united in woman. Her voice was harmony; her figure was perfect symmetry, her every motion grace; and when raising her eyes on an exclamation of surprise uttered by the child, she discovered Mr. Neville, she received and returned his compliments with that sweet simplicity, that unaffected dignity, which spoke her inborn innocence of soul, while her animated countenance

countenance varied, she turned pale, then a rosy blush in quick succession tinged her transparent skin; for the bloom of happiness had forsaken her cheek; yet the delicate languor, the look of plaintive sweetness, only rendered her more interestingly lovely, and gave a convincing proof, that misfortune can add charms to beauty, which, on a feeling mind, gives additional force to its power.

Nature had endowed our hero with a spirit uncommonly sanguine from his birth; whatever he hoped, he thought possible; and reason was seldom able to keep pace with the flights of his imagination. Nothing
could

could equal the charms with which the dawn of this world may be said to have broken upon his view at the expiration of infancy; like the morn^ging seen through a light mist, every object was magnified, and fancy in the future imperfectly beheld nothing but the colours of beauty on the ground of happiness; while the sun of life was rising he never thought of being scorched in its meridian, or chilled by its departure. His spirits were only checked by sensibility, and tempered by tenderness; working on a disposition unusually affectionate; but the early disappointment he had encountered in the object of his first love, had produced a dreadful void.

void in the sphere of his affections, and had dried up the channels through which they had flowed ; misfortune, however, gave a vigour to his mind, which perhaps it before wanted ; and young ambition, mixed with the pursuit of pleasure, in some measure filled the vacuity, and made those years spent on the continent pass like a fleeting dream. But now that the novelty of scenes which first engaged his attention had vanished, pleasure began to cloy ; his heart naturally looked abroad for some mind similar to his own, that could really love, and feel the joy of reciprocal attachment. Long did he gaze at the brighter sex without meeting any

congenial spirit with whom he thought happiness could be attained, or to whom he hoped to be the instrument of that felicity the communication of which affords a delight known only to those who have felt the supreme pleasure of making a beloved object happy. Admiration a thousand times got possession of his breast at the fair faces he beheld in the various courts which for the last seven years he had visited ; but steady love was so slow before it occupied a second time his heart, that at last he began to think he should no more feel its existence, but be doomed to view the sex with indifference, approaching to disgust ; for Henry did
not

not then know, that amid the crowd of females, disagreeable by vanity, by folly, by temper, by apathy, there yet existed superior and angelic beings, hard indeed to be found, and in quest of whom a man might wander through this wilderness of life to its end, without happening to find what he sought; and probably in the search fix on the worst of mortals.

In this state of mind it was Henry's fate to behold Alicia Arundel. The modest reserve of her manners would have caused her perfections to be unobserved by fools; notwithstanding her graceful person and

lovely countenance would have claimed from any man the appellation of a most beautiful woman, conscious dignity of character, and unwillingness to obtrude the excellencies she possessed, left their discovery to observation more keen than that of the common crowd of beaux. Her sweet eyes expressed not merely strength of understanding, and suavity of temper, but also an innocent playfulness hid under natural shyness to strangers, and an unaffected modesty, which, like the cheerful sun behind a summer's cloud, discovers in a thousand scattered lights his playful beams. Before an hour had elapsed, by polished and interesting conversation, Henry had

had

had banished reserve from her bosom, and enjoyed all the unrestrained charms of natural eloquence: such refined delicacy of sentiment flowing from the most lovely mouth Nature ever formed, made the elegant Neville her own for ever.

Mr. Doringfield at last entered the room, and, after a short time passed in the society he had joined, requested our hero would spend the remainder of the day at his cottage, and, till dinner should be served, accompany him in a walk. He particularly wished to point out some improvements he had made in his little domain during the absence of his pupil;

which he flattered himself would receive the sanction of his approbation. "My wife and Lavinia," continued the good man, "will not return till evening; but Alicia will supply the place of Mrs. Doringfield; and when she is present, we can scarcely feel the want of any one's society; for I assure you, Mr. Neville, the more you know of this sweet child of mine, the more you will find to admire. As you become acquainted with the rich treasures of her mind, and see her kind attention to this unfortunate little infant, you will believe it is not the least part of that humanity she is ever ready to evince to all who stand in need of her regard and assistance.

tance. Indeed, she is almost a parent to the deserted Lydia; who has a claim on your heart, my dear Henry, which, when you are informed of its nature, my own tells me, you will not renounce. The particular circumstance which induces me to make this demand on your affections, I will impart to you during our ramble." Then taking his hat from off the head of the playful child, who had crept between his knees, he entered the garden, reluctantly followed by our hero, who could not bear, even for a moment, to quit a place in which he had discovered such numberless attractions; and, with the impetuosity of youth and fervent

F 4 passion,

passion, he resolved immediately to lay open to the inspection of Mr. Doringfield the sentiments by which his soul was occupied.

Not a moment was lost in putting this plan into execution ; he candidly confessed, that on his first introduction to the ladies which composed his domestic circle, his admiration and attention had been shared between the two most lovely girls he had ever beheld ; that the fair Lavinia had made a momentary impression on his imagination ; but the fascinating Alicia had thrown, once more, the shafts of love into his bosom ; “ Yet till this moment,”
continued

continued he, “ I was unconscious of the extent of the dominion she acquired over my whole soul; a passion so fervent, that, unless it be returned with ardour equal to my own, I find will render me for ever miserable.” His respectable friend did not interrupt Mr. Neville, until he had given the fullest explanation of his future intention; then taking him kindly by the hand, he said, with an interest strongly marked by the emotion visible in his manner, “ The sincerity and friendship you have evinced towards me, by the candid communication you have just made, my dear young friend, at the same moment produce in my mind

the opposite sensations of pain and pleasure. Believe me, I am fully sensible of the high price I ought to set on confidence thus honourably reposed; but I have reasons to lament the attachment so hastily formed; however, the openness of your avowal demands equal candour on my part. It is but justice you should be made acquainted with some events, in which the members of my family are particularly concerned; and in which, owing to the indiscretion of one nearly connected with you, my amiable pupil, you cannot feel uninterested." Doringfield then briefly related the particulars of the unfortunate partiality of Lord Ormington to the

the lovely but guilty daughter of his wife; the fruit of which connexion Henry heard with astonishment and regret was that engaging little being, whom he in future promised to regard as his own, since a misguided brother omitted to fulfil those tender duties, the heart of a father, under every circumstance, ought to acknowledge and perform. But it was a subject on which he feared to enter with the Earl; for, in the irritable and shattered state to which he was reduced, fatal might have been the effects of any conversation that could in the slightest degree agitate the feeble frame of this martyr to dissipation; who, at the age of thirty-

three, was sinking into an early grave, to which his own vices had conducted him. Though at the very moment a deep consumption threatened each day to terminate his existence, did his credulous and ambitious mother seek out for this darling son, an alliance from which she thought the dignity of the house of Ormington would acquire an extension of its honours.

On Henry's declaring his future intentions respecting his little niece, Mr. Doringfield warmly thanked him for that liberality of sentiment which was exactly what he had expected from a disposition such as he possessed ;

possessed ; different in every point from those young men, who, by the sophistry of their principles, ruin the peace of the unfortunate victims, who, from passion, or vanity, become an easy prey to those arts so fatally practised against their honour ; who are taught by their seducers to believe, that to the gratification of love every sacrifice must be made ; that affection cannot be felt where any thing is withheld from its object ; that marriage is the grave of passion, and serves but to feed the vanity of those women who are incapable of rising above the vulgar prejudices of the world. To sentiments like these had Miss Dormer, once virtuous as lovely,

lovely, become the easy prey ; and when too late her eyes were opened by conviction, sorrow, remorse, and shame, ended a life that might have passed in happiness to herself and honour to those connected with her.

“ But now, my dear Sir,” said Henry, “ let us return to the subject on which the future felicity of my life is at stake ; and tell me, I beseech you, who are the parents of Miss Arundel ? And why, on the first morning of my visiting you after my return to Derbyshire, did I witness, in the behaviour of Mrs Doringfield, and the beautiful Lavinia, an air of such cold dislike to that enchanting girl ?

girl? whom I cannot conceive it possible for any person to behold but with sentiments almost amounting to adoration." This question recalled to the mind of Doringfield some painful recollections which he strove to hide; and he replied to his enthusiastic companion, " I can only attribute the accusation thus made to the ardour of your own feelings; but recollect, it is not the fortunate lot of all, to make friends and lovers of every person by whom they are beheld. The few particulars respecting the family of Alicia, which I am now at liberty to disclose, I will frankly impart to you; but it will be some months before she becomes of age; a period,

a period, when she will be put in possession of a fortune equal to the rank she was born to fill ; till the arrival of that day she was intrusted to my care; and that of my deceased wife, who was the beloved friend of her amiable but unfortunate mother, with such solemn injunctions of secrecy, that not even to her husband, should she marry before that day, am I permitted to disclose her true situation ; which, to remove any doubts you may entertain, I assure you on my word, will confer dignity on any man, who may connect his destiny with hers. While yet ignorant of that station in life she has a right to fill, by birth as well as by the most exalted

exalted merit to which the female mind can attain, she has conducted herself with honour and credit to all who have had a share in her education. To my protection she was bequeathed by the last solemn injunctions of a much valued and tenderly beloved friend ; and I trust the sacred charge has been fulfilled in a manner which, were the inhabitants of another world permitted to look down on the transactions passing in this vale of sorrow, would remove all anxiety about the fate of that darling child ; whom, since that moment, I have regarded with the fondest love a parent's heart could feel. For some reasons, the nature of which I am at a
 loss

loss to account for, Mrs. Doringfield and Lavinia do not regard her with such sentiments as her sweet disposition and gentle manners should claim from those who are hourly witnesses of the superiority she possesses over all other women; yes, I may say, by the uncommon clearness of her understanding; by that happy mixture of mildness and of strength which is gentle innocence to all around, and yet can repress the impertinence of the coxcomb, and the insolence of fancied superiority; and who, by the awfulness of virtue, can subdue the approaches of vulgar familiarity, without the austerity of prudery; to which are added, the
most

most unchangeable sweetness of temper ; a junction of all the playfulness of youth, with the discretion of maturity ; a mind, over which scandal has no charms, and on which smartness does not pass for sense : add to these a thousand other amiable qualities, concealed from the general world by her modesty, but appearing in all their force to my vigilant eye, which has found her, after years of continued observation, unlike and superior to every woman I have ever known. In truth, she is a being of angelic nature ; and any man, once attached to Alicia Arundel, will ever continue to love, admire, and adore her. Indeed, the similarity
of

of taste and temper between yourself and this fascinating girl, makes me almost believe in that philosophy, which teaches that souls are made in pairs, and to imagine you have found the sister being cast by Nature in the same mould ; but at the time I thus frankly speak my approbation of an attachment which I doubt not would constitute the happiness of two persons inexpressibly dear to my heart, yet allow me to hint, that the Countess of Ormington is, I have good reason to know, of a disposition so haughty, that even your frequent visits to my humble cottage will be highly disapproved by her Ladyship : and if to the many objections she already

ready

ready entertains against me, were added the knowledge, that you had bestowed your heart on a ward of mine, no step on her part will be wanting to deter you from forming a union with Miss Arundel; for you are not now to learn, that I have never been fortunate enough to be viewed in a favourable light by the daughter of my earliest patron the Duke of Malvern; and had the late Earl, your father, attended to the prejudices of her Ladyship, never should I have had the gratification to have been intrusted with the charge of your early years. I date her dislike to a conviction Lady Ormington has imbibed, that some events

events in which, at a distance of many years, she was concerned, had come to my knowledge ; and it is this idea which will ever render me hateful in her eyes ; which, together with the humble sphere in which I move, as rector of a country village, makes her Ladyship deem me unworthy the honour of your friendship ; for your mother, my amiable pupil, does not condescend to remember that life is but a game at chess, where different orders of men have their several walks and stations assigned to them ; and when the game is over, we are all jumbled one with another into the same bag. Freely as I am thus speaking to you, believe me I feel it
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an unthankful office to point out the faults of a parent to the observation of a son ; but at a future period, not far distant, some events, with which in all probability you will then be made acquainted, render it absolutely necessary for me to warn you, that you will never receive the sanction of your mother to a marriage, by which you now think your happiness will be secure. Once you have given up your own wishes to those of your family ; and this attachment, so hastily formed, should be strengthened by time, and a further acquaintance with the object who has inspired it, before you risk her future tranquillity by a knowledge of your sentiments,

ments, until they are so firmly fixed, as not to leave a possibility of her ever being left to regret the having resigned her own heart in return for the partiality with which you now honour her. Excuse this caution, which proceeds alone from the interest I take in both; you are too amiable, I am well convinced, to trifle with the peace of any woman; and the affections of my Alicia, when once gained, will be fixed for life. Oblige me, then, in this one request, that, at least for some time, you refrain from paying her any of those endearing attentions which mark the lover, and win the secure possession of a woman's heart, even before

fore the demand has been formally made for surrendering it. Grant me this petition, which her quiet urges me to offer ; and if, on a more intimate knowledge of her virtues, you continue your resolution of making her your wife, my task will be happily accomplished ; and in resigning her to your arms, I am well convinced her felicity will be secured, and the benedictions of her departed parents will fall on my head, for having been the humble instrument in forming a connexion, which had they been permitted to have witnessed, would have gratified every wish their hearts could have formed for the establishment of Alicia ; whose

VOL. I. G mind,

mind, you will soon discover, is a valuable mine, or repository of Art and Nature's choicest treasures."

After a silence of some minutes, during which he appeared absorbed in profound meditation, Henry replied to his cautious friend, that he trusted he was incapable of deceiving Miss Arundel ; and as the most convincing proof he could give of the seriousness of his intentions, he would not hesitate, much as such restraint would cost him, to comply with the demand he had made ; but would endeavour to divide his attentions so equally between the two lovely girls who shared his protection, as to give
neither

neither reason to believe she was the attraction which drew him to the parsonage, where he trusted he should ever continue to be received with a confidence no power on earth should tempt him to deceive. This request was affectionately agreed to by the worthy rector, whom Henry assured, however indifferent his own feelings were respecting the rank and fortune of Miss Arundel, yet as it might serve to reconcile his mother to his marriage, he felt pleased at the conviction of her possessing those advantages which, in the eyes of the worldly-minded, supersede every other possession.

The dinner-bell having summoned them to return, they soon joined the little party assembled in the dining-room, where, unconscious of her power, sat the lovely subject of their morning *tête-à-tête*. Music and conversation occupied the hours till tea; after which Mr. Neville bade them adieu; and, self-invited, promised to revisit Ashbourn in a very short time, again to renew the happiness he had that day so fully enjoyed.

On the return of Henry to Bellevue, he found the whole household in a state of the utmost confusion; for during his absence, in the exertion
occasioned

occasioned by a violent fit of coughing, the intended bridegroom had broken a blood-vessel, from which the attendant faculty apprehended the most immediate ill consequences; and even the Countess herself began to suspect, that the nineteenth Earl of Ormington would be snatched from all his honours by that grim tyrant, who acknowledges no distinction in those marked by his cold and unrelenting hand. Should the projected union with Lady Georgiana Crawford be thus disappointed, in this case, with true policy, her Ladyship had already determined, that the *Heir Apparent* of this illustrious house should receive the transfer of

the fair hand now destined for his dying brother; and as the young lady herself had not been consulted at all in the business, the ambitious mother readily settled in her own mind, that any branch from so noble a stalk, when adorned by one of the most ancient coronets in the united kingdoms, would be equally acceptable in the eye of both father and daughter. And not supposing it possible that Henry, who had hitherto made her will his law, could form the slightest objection to this, in her opinion, feasible plan, this provident mother, in a letter she addressed to the Earl of Gifford, explanatory of the present state in which Lord Ormington

Ormington lay, did not omit to name her other son, in a manner which could not fail to point out to the wary Peer the arrangement already formed, in case that Power no mortal can resist, should prevent a ceremony so ardently desired from different causes, by both families ; each equally eager to secure the blessings most prized by their avaricious and ambitious hearts.

A few days after the relapse of Lord Ormington, two young men made their appearance at Bellevue, with the intention of passing some weeks in the pursuit of those field sports with which the neighbour-

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hood

hood so amply abounded ; and in the society of Henry they did not find any loss of the company of his drooping Lordship, who was now wholly confined to his apartment, from which his medical friends (not choosing him to die immediately under their own auspices) ordered him to be conveyed to Bristol, by easy stages, in a litter ; to which place the Countess prepared to attend the dying representative of those honours, the full attainment of which, in her own person, had already cost her the sacrifice of those ties which ought to be held most sacred by the heart of woman. Mr. Neville requested to go with his noble relatives ;

tives ; but his company was dispensed with, under the plea of hospitality to the friends who were just arrived at Bellevue, who, with the unrestrained freedom of modern good breeding, had avowed an intention of prolonging their visit for some weeks ; and who did not appear to think it necessary to change their plan, though the Lord of the Castle was in such a state as to render his own removal absolutely indispensable.

Henry, with a heart spell-bound within the magic circle of five miles, did not further press an attendance, which he saw would have afforded so little comfort to either party ; and

taking an affectionate leave of Lord Ormington, promised to join him as soon as he could with propriety shake off the self-invited guests, to whom he was left to perform the honours of the Castle.

Sir Granby Darcy was one of those every-day characters, who pass in the world like straws in a river ; his mornings had been occupied, like the multitude of heroes who infest Bond Street, to the annoyance of every modest woman who may have the misfortune to attract their attention ; and his evenings passed in the still more destructive amusements of the gaming-table. He was the sworn
friend

friend of Lord Ormington, and had driven his curriclc into Derbyshire for the express purpose of dozing away a few weeks at his abode of gloomy magnificence.

Not such a character was the handsome, the frank-hearted Fortescue: in him were united all that can add dignity to rank; to see, you must admire his numberless attractions; and, when acquainted with the unbounded generosity, the universal philanthropy of his soul, it was impossible to refuse the tribute his merit so justly entitled him to receive from all who were distinguished by his friendship. He was the only son of the late Earl

of Ormington's sister, who had been at an early age left a widow, with two children, equally amiable, to share her maternal care; and never was the sacred trust more amply fulfilled than by this deserving woman, who, happy in the smiling pledges of a husband's love, did not, by forming a second marriage, divide with any other those regards, which, while blessed in the society of a man she adored, were exclusively his own; and now when death had snatched him from her arms, the recollection of his virtues, and of his love, made her reject the many splendid offers which had courted her acceptance. That passionate tenderness which as a wife

wife had marked her character, now subsided into the calm affections of a careful mother ; and never was parent more warmly beloved. An illness, which to the anxious heart of Lady Cecilia bore every alarming aspect, had induced her to carry her beloved daughter to the mild skies of Italy ; where after having passed two winters, the delicate health of Miss Fortescue had been perfectly restored ; and her Ladyship had written to the Countess of Ormington, that, immediately on her return to England, she would visit Bellevue for some days, instead of going directly to Heathside, the ancient mansion of the Fortescues, which was distant from the Castle about

about four miles : a road had been cut through the park, to facilitate the constant meeting of the two families, who were so nearly related, and had ever lived on terms of the strictest friendship with each other ; for the late Earl tenderly loved his sister, and the Countess had ever thought it expedient to keep on good terms with her Ladyship.

Mr. Fortescue, who held a considerable post under Government, had been prevented by affairs of state from attending the ladies of his family on their foreign excursion ; and parliament having risen, he hastened to give them a meeting at the house
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of Lord Ormington. It was for this purpose he had arrived at the Castle time enough to behold its present Lord commence a journey to that bourn from whence he never more returned.



From the age of childhood Henry Neville and his amiable cousin had been attached to each other by the strictest bonds of friendship; but now that his whole soul was occupied by the charming Alicia, every other sentiment appeared absorbed in that which, like a whirlwind, swept all before it. So true it is, when love gains possession of the heart, friendship grows languid, and nothing

thing remains but that tyrannic passion, which is the king of young men, and the tyrant of old ones.

In the course of their rides the youthful trio made frequent calls at Ashbourn parsonage; it possessed the powerful magnets of attraction in the two lovely girls by whom it was inhabited; and so fascinated was Sir Granby Darcy by the beautiful Lavinia, that he swore he found it would be impossible for him to exist without her; and as he was perfectly his own master, with a fortune sufficiently large to connect himself with any beautiful, though portionless female, who would grace his table,
and

and draw down the envy of his St. James's Street cotemporaries by the possession of a dashing-looking woman, who could adorn his elegant curricule, he quickly determined, if he could not gain her as a mistress, to offer her his hand, before he left the Castle. His marked attentions could not escape the penetrating eyes of the sharp-sighted Mrs. Doringfield; who, at the same time that she rejoiced at the visible preference given to her idolized Lavinia by the young Baronet, could not at once resign the still more dazzling expectations she had formed with regard to Mr. Nevill; as, by the attainment of an alliance with that family,

she

she should at the same time gratify her two ruling passions, ambition and revenge.

The delicate but tender regard visible at all times in the eyes and manner of the elegant Henry when addressing Miss Arundel, filled her dark mind with the most destructive of all passions. Had Envy the government of creation, what a world would it be! her breath would infect the air with pestilence, and her turbulence make the seas unnavigable; sadness would overcast the face of Nature; peace would be banished; pleasure languish, and happiness expire; nothing settled, all things confused;

fufed; madnefs without intervals,
 and poifon without antidote; virtue,
 under her direction, would be per-
 verted; all noble undertakings crush-
 ed; and all fair inventions nipped in
 the bud; whatever was the enemy of
 her reign would foon be made to
 look dull; beauty would be deform-
 ed; to excel another in art, or by
 nature, would be high treason
 againft the ftate of Envy; though ſhe
 has no other fruit to exiſt upon, and
 none would be ſafe, but the ill-
 looked, the ill-diſpoſed, and the ufe-
 leſs; for they who with their own
 troubles take the happineſs of their
 neighbours to diſturb them, are likely
 to have employ enough. So it was
 with

with this fiend in a female shape ; who was rendered nearly insensible to the good fortune of her darling child, by the idea only that it was possible the future establishment of the gentle and unassuming Alicia might be still more brilliant. Should her fears be realized, of an attachment having been formed between two young persons, whom Heaven appeared to have destined to constitute the felicity of each other, it was impossible for her interested penetration not to discover, from the indescribably expressive countenance of Miss Arundel, the delight she took in the visible regard of Henry. In looking in her eyes one could translate a conversation ;

versation; and how often did those eloquent and artless monitors rebuke, in language more searching, more forcible than words, the man she regarded as a pattern in most respects worthy the imitation of his sex, for that seducing gallantry which he lavished on Miss Dormer, at the moment every sentence, every look, confirmed to Alicia, that his whole soul was devoted to her alone!

It was the promise given to his tutor, that prevented Henry from declaring the fervent passion with which his heart was filled; but he now found the restraint he had at first imposed on himself was no longer
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to be borne; and he formed the determination to gain absolution of Mr. Doringfield, and at once know his fate from the ruby lips of Alicia.

Since the time that Cupid was wrapped in his cradle, never was any creature so deeply in love. Often during their rides and walks would he fall into conversations, in which he might with much propriety have explained the emotions which overpowered him; for anxiety occupied his mind, lest her affections might be engaged, or be by him unattainable. His prospects in life were now becoming considerable, but his passion rendered him so timid, that he
feared

feared he knew not what ; and trembled at the idea of losing that confidence her every action announced she felt for him, by a disclosure of an affection, in the return of which his every thought of future happiness was centred. Had he not been blinded by his solicitude, he could easily have discovered, that in the tenderness of her conduct she was actuated by a sentiment more endearing than that of friendship : but Hope, that lively flattering nymph of solacing converse, had not given our interesting lover one peep through her approximating glass, which presents to the self-deceived, gardens of myrtles and roses ; and he now lived

on

on the racking tortures of suspense : his former vivacity fled, and he became absent and absorbed when surrounded by his friends, and even in the presence of the woman he adored. When the heart is deeply affected there is always a diffidence ; it is so engrossed by the object of its love, that it has not leisure to trifle : gaiety implies a vacancy of thought : to be gay, and to be happy, are distinct, if not opposite things ; for excessive happiness is of a serious nature.

Three weeks elapsed ; during which time daily calls at the parsonage had served so well to amuse the young visitors at the Castle, that they

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never,

never thought of a removal from a neighbourhood which possessed so many charms. Though suspicious of the nature of those sentiments entertained by Mr. Neville and Miss Arundel, the deserving Fortescue had not been able to steel his heart against the united charms of beauty, talents, and simplicity ; which latter is the stamp of greatness and truth ; though, at the same time that he felt her power, he had determined never to breathe a sentence explanatory of his affections, should he ascertain the half-formed belief he had conceived, that his friend's prior right had really its foundation in something more than his own jealous

surmises ; for his heart was cast in
 that noble mould, which rendered
 the happiness of the object beloved
 far more desirable than even his own
 could be : so pure, so disinterested,
 was the passion he had imbibed for
 the attractive Alicia, who won all
 hearts without being conscious of
 her power. Her dress was the index
 of her mind, elegant, graceful, and
 modest ; her eye ever beamed with
 sweet serenity ; and even if chance
 brought any of her friends to Ash-
 bourn during the time she appro-
 priated to her pupil, she never suf-
 fered them to encroach one moment
 on those allotted hours. In a mixed
 company she spoke little ; but when
 drawn

drawn out on some action useful to humanity, on the beauties of Nature, or the *chefs-d'œuvre* of art, then would the gentle eloquence of her soul flow from her ruby lips like a pure stream between beds of flowers.

One morning Mr. Neville requested Miss Arundel would oblige him with an air on the harp ; Lavinia had before seated herself unobserved by him at the piano forte, on which she performed in a masterly style, and felt extremely piqued at the demand having been made on any other, when she felt so ready herself to oblige him. Burning blushes

suffused the fair faces of both the ladies, but from motives very opposite. Alicia's cheeks reflected the modest glow of timidity, heightened by artless pleasure at any mark of preference bestowed by the man whom her innocent and affectionate heart whispered had gained entire possession of the citadel, even before he had formally demanded it to capitulate. But the agitation of Lavinia proceeded from a different cause: mortified vanity gave birth to the crimson tide, and malice lurked under the ensnaring smile of pretended simplicity and good-humour.

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To the request of Mr. Neville, Alicia replied with her accustomed sweetness, that her skill and execution being so inferior to that of Miss Dormer, she could not think of depriving the gentlemen of the gratification they must enjoy from her performance, by intruding her own on their attention ; besides which, little Lydia had that morning broken some strings of her harp, which it would cost her a small degree of trouble to repair. Henry appeared contented with the excuse she made, and guessed the motive which dictated the delicate evasion ; and the unassuming gentleness of her manner, in endeavouring to hide the most brilliant

of her accomplishments, added fresh fuel to the fire of his regard.

Lavinia remarked, with an air of peevish vexation, that it was mighty strange Alicia should allow the child to injure so charming an instrument ; but that she had only herself to blame for that, or any other mischief she might do, by indulging the tiresome little plague in all her wild fancies, which, in the end, would turn out infinitely to the girl's prejudice, by rendering her a torment to every person who had the misfortune to have any thing to do with her.

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This tender speech, uttered by the only sister to the ill-fated mother of this orphan lamb, was in itself sufficient to have done away any favourable impression she might have made on a heart such as Henry Neville's, had he been inclined to become a captive to those charms which she thought must convert every man into an adorer. Alicia turned to the window in silence, to hide the disgust she could not fail to experience at such an unnatural sentiment, expressed by one who ought to have felt, in a peculiar manner, the claims of the interesting and lovely child, who was so greatly in want of the tenderest attention of those relatives, from

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whom

whom alone she was authorized to claim protection.

Sir Granby Darcy was present during the specimen of refined humanity given by that woman he had serious intentions to make his wife ; but he was not of a character sufficiently delicate to be shocked at the unfeeling disposition it evinced. Gay, frivolous, and unthinking, he joined to these points the affectation of eccentricity, literature, and wit ; and he never considered, that an attachment to an improper object begins by making a man ridiculous, and ends by rendering him contemptible ; or, that an attempt at wit
only

only serves to place folly in a more distinguished point of view. To qualify himself to support the latter character, he had recourse every day to the study of some obsolete jest-book, from which he would read two or three pages before he went to dine with his friends, with one or other of whom he took his meals duly throughout the year: he was, therefore, the worst acquaintance a man could have who wanted a dinner, since he never dined at home; and his only motive for now thinking of matrimony, was the *reclat* he hoped to receive, on introducing to the fashionable world a woman who, as Lady Darcy, would shine in the

hemisphere of rank, with all that lustre the most distinguished beauty could confer on the man who had the pre-eminent good fortune to discover this jewel, and bear it to those circles where it was alone calculated to sparkle with uncontrolled splendour. He never once reflected, that the only happiness a married life is capable of affording, is to enjoy in the same person the delights of love and the pleasures of friendship; finding at the same time, an affectionate wife, and a faithful friend:—no felicity comparable to this can the present life afford!

Lavinia

Lavinia was not insensible to the manifold advantages she was likely to enjoy, should her charms secure her an alliance of such importance ; but at the same moment that she gave every encouragement the most timid lover could require, she had much rather the attentions she received had been offered at her shrine by the Heir Apparent to the house of Ormington, than by the fashionable, the elegant Sir Granby Darcy, who was what you will without, and nothing within. Miss Dormer, though gifted but with a very small stock of penetration, found the contrast between them too striking not to acknowledge the great superiority of

Henry Neville to every man within the circle of her acquaintance ; for, though love is a blind emotion, which does not always suppose merit in its object, yet it is far more flattering to a handsome woman to be beloved by a man of sense than to be adored by a fool ; and while fully conscious of the power she had gained over the heart of the Baronet, she secretly envied those superior attractions which it was pretty evident had secured the future Earl of Ormington as the ardent lover of Alicia.

The accounts from Bristol were such as to preclude all possibility of hope respecting the recovery of the
Earl ;

Earl; although the physicians gave in their opinion that he might yet linger for some time, as, contrary to their expectations, he continued to survive the bursting of a blood-vessel, which they had expected would have occasioned his immediate dissolution. The idea of losing an only brother, in spite of all his faults ever tenderly beloved, and with whom he had plucked the first roses of childhood, had a visible effect on the naturally cheerful disposition of Henry; which, joined to the uncertain state of his mind respecting his own future plans, made his face appear the mourning throne on which Melancholy sat triumphant; but he had frequently

frequently the happiness to observe, that he was regarded with looks of the tenderest sympathy by the soft eyes of his gentle friend ; and that she listened with a most interesting attention to the repetition of those griefs he thought proper to share with her. Often did the starting tear, or even her expressive silence, bring conviction to his heart that he was not beheld with indifference by the attractive Alicia, whose calm, and, until now, unruffled bosom, began to feel the anxious pangs of tenderness for him, who she had not a sufficient portion of vanity to believe felt for her any other sentiments than esteem and friendship ; and to be re-
garded

garded in that light by Henry Neville, she thought would be more grateful to her heart, than professions of love from any other man. Conscious of the passion which had stolen by imperceptible degrees on her gentle nature, she blamed herself for the presumptuous flattering hope which would, in spite of reason, sometimes steal on her mind, that the melting tones of his voice when addressing her, and the passionate regard of his eloquent eyes which he could not conceal when fixed on her face, had their rise in that affection without which she was convinced she should never know happiness but by name; for, to a mind like that possessed by
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our heroine, to taste once of the pure stream of tenderness is to fix her fate for ever.

Henry now began to hope, that, when once he had explained his views, Alicia would not refuse to accept his heart, and share his future fortune; and he determined to seize the first moment favourable to his wishes; for his nature was too impetuous to discover any obstacle to their union, if blessed by a return of love. One morning, finding her alone in the garden, with trembling lips he discovered to her his sentiments, and was answered by a flood of tears. Despair for a moment seized

seized his mind ; he was scarcely able to express his dread that this symptom indicated her heart to be pre-engaged ; and if truly interpreted, he resolved it should render him dumb for ever, whatever the consequence to his health or to his peace. With a soul and understanding superior to disguise or affectation, she assured him her emotion was only occasioned by surprise, and spoke approbation in a returning smile of softness inexpressible.

The feelings of Henry were those of a fluttering spirit unexpectedly admitted to paradise. As soon as the trembling, blushing Alicia recovered

covered the power of speech, which excess of happiness had deprived her of, she exclaimed, " Merciful Power ! who hast thus blessed me with the prospect of future felicity, deign to watch over my destiny, conduct the sentiments of my heart, and sanctify the engagement we are about to form ! " Then turning to Henry, she continued, " Notwithstanding the delight I scrupled not to confess the knowledge of your tenderness brings to my bosom, I at this moment feel a sensation of dread, the nature of which I cannot account for. Ah, my friend ! should it be a presentiment of impending misfortune——" " Talk not of misfortune,

tune,

tune, my only love!" cried the enraptured Henry, clasping her fondly to his heart; "never can it reach me, while blessed by that affection, your candid avowal of which has rendered me the most enviable of mankind: and when you are my own adored wife, the companion of my life, it shall be my only care to prevent your every wish. Under my protection you will find shelter from all the storms of the world; so suffer not a thought of future sorrow to embitter our present joy! Thus," cried he, falling on his knees before her, "suffer your lover, your husband, to express the obligations he feels, and to which, words are incapable

pable of giving utterance. For ever," cried he, pressing her hands with fervour, " you shall be the idol of my heart, the arbiter of my destiny !"

He fondly looked in the face of Alicia, who, with her eyes bent on the earth, was unable to reply ; and he continued, " It was on this very spot, my angel, that my soul was first fascinated by the enchanting tones of your voice ; it was here I became acquainted with the piety, the virtue, of your mind ; and it is here that I ratify the solemn gift of that heart which is, and ever will be, attached to you alone."—" Rise, my

my beloved friend," said the blushing Alicia; "can you suppose, the lowly posture in which you have placed yourself can give you more power over my heart than your own merit and the disinterested proofs of your love have already acquired? Let us then talk with calmness on some subjects it is necessary we should arrange; and in which others are to be consulted equally as ourselves; for, highly as I esteem, much as I prize the honour conferred on me, I cannot consent to receive your vows till sanctioned by a mother's approbation, and that of my worthy and respected Mr. Doringfield, who has acted as a parent to me since that fatal period it pleased Hea-

ven to deprive me of those to whom I owe my birth.”—“ Dear, excellent Alicia !” cried he, “ assure yourself Doringfield will sanction our love ; he already knows that you are the idol of my heart ; and you have my permission to speak to him instantly on the subject : as to my mother, I honour, I love her ; but suffer me to speak respecting her rather as a man who knows the world, than as a son. Never has her tenderness been shewn to her children at any other time than when it could gratify the ambition of her character ; and to that passion she would sacrifice all which ought to be most dear to the soul of a parent, the happiness of her sons.

Already

Already are her views respecting the marriage she had projected for my brother on the point of being demolished ; and when he is no more, I shall have additional ties on her mind, from being the only remaining representative of two noble families ; and I am well convinced she will leave nothing undone to induce me to take a wife from some house, by an alliance with which our own would receive additional splendour. Consent then to relieve me from this struggle, by immediately accepting my hand, and putting it beyond the power of Fate to divide hearts which are united, I trust, by the truest affection. Never, dear Alicia,

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shall

shall I know cessation from pain till that blessed moment which makes you mine for ever. My aunt, Lady Cecilia Fortescue, is every thing I could have wished my mother to have been, and gladly will she receive to her arms the idolized wife of her favourite nephew. Every hour is she expected at Bellevue, and not a moment will I lose in presenting you to each other. From her you will receive a mother's tender attention, and a sister's love from her amiable Olivia. But remember," added he, smiling as he spoke, "I do not bid you love the attractive son of this dear aunt; for, to let you into a secret, I must add I am a jealous creature,

creature, and cannot bear you should even smile on any man but your happy, destined husband. I think jealousy is so inseparable from an ardent passion, that I shall even doubt the strength of your regard, my gentle Alicia, if I do not see a dash of its poison in your composition; for, believe me, a lover cannot avoid feeling a little jealous when his mistress appears to entertain none for him."—"Well then, if it will be any gratification for you to know that you have already been the cause of uneasiness to me, I have only to say, often has my heart blamed you for those attentions occasionally shewn to the charming Lavinia; to

whom, and to her mother, the knowledge of your choice will, I am well convinced, be the cause of much disquietude, as I have never been a favourite with either; and now that I interfere with their hopes, I know not what I am to expect. It is my earnest wish, that, for some little time, this affair should be kept from their knowledge. Full well I know that both mother and daughter had the greatest expectations, and I feel too much for the disappointment of the latter not to pity her when she is made acquainted, that it is I who am the object of your esteem.” — “ Dear, generous girl!” said he; “ Miss Dormer is incapable of feeling a disinterested

disinterested affection for any man; and never have I given her any hopes, but what her own vanity has inspired; which leads her to suppose that all who behold, must confess the power of her charms.”—“ Ha!” cried Alicia, “ how dearly does your sex force ours to pay for the attentions you bestow! Surely you have at times held a different language to Lavinia; and I now see the most generous will sometimes trifle with the happiness of others.”—“ Can you suppose, my dearest,” returned he, “ that I could have known you, and have ever thought of Lavinia? No; I entreat you to believe, that if at any time she has appeared to engage my

attention, it was only to hide from others a passion which consumed my heart."—" Seek not," interrupted Alicia, " by the seducing voice of flattery to render me unjust, by building my own felicity on that which may perhaps embitter the peace of another. You are too amiable to trifle with impunity ; and, in my opinion, it is the worst of all robberies, to endeavour to gain a preference until a heart has been given in earnest for the one bestowed. How grievous must be the disappointment of hopes to which a pretended regard gave birth, but is again destroyed by caprice or inconstancy, and leaves us to lament the easy credulity

dulity of our nature! Perhaps you will be offended by my thus freely expressing my ideas on a subject, where I may be judging the feelings of Miss Dornier by the standard of mine; yet, I sincerely hope her heart is still her own, or that she has bestowed it on Sir Granby Darcy, who appears to have relinquished his at her shrine. But forgive my remarks; for I feel I am talking an unwarrantable liberty, which must convince you too much indulgence will spoil me quite.”—“Forgive you, my dearest love! Be assured this noble consideration for your sex only serves to augment my opinion of yourself; and more fully convinces

me of the jewel I shall possess when our good friend will have united us for ever: and for doing me this essential service, he shall be recompensed, if in my power to procure it, with a mitre." Alicia, penetrated with gratitude for his grateful recollection of Mr. Doringfield, looking on him with her soft eyes swimming in tenderness, cried, "God will bless you for the thought! and, oh! how much am I blessed by the possession of such a treasure as your heart!"

The transported Neville, snatching her to him, requested she would immediately allow Mr. Doringfield, by performing

performing the ceremony, to become entitled to the reward. “ You have enraptured me,” cried he; “ with the confession that I am dear to you; why then delay our mutual happiness? Let me now hear from those rosy lips that I am the most fortunate of men. You alone possess my whole soul; and be assured, most angelic being, created for my good, that I will exist but to practise that virtue which you love, and to give proofs of the most exalted, most ardent affection to yourself, and of the gratitude I owe to that Heaven, which, I trust, will bless our union; for, from this happy day, I claim you for my own; and but a very few

prayer, that the Almighty would protect and bless them; then turning to Henry, he added, " Be assured, my dear young friend, that in confiding to your protection this beloved girl; you will receive a wife equal to yourself in all those advantages which are by the world esteemed as necessary to happiness; the day will soon arrive, when, in obedience to her parents' will, I shall be at liberty to disclose the secret of her birth to the man who, while yet ignorant of that circumstance, has had the disinterested generosity to place her in that rank she has every right to fill. And now that we are come to this present understanding,

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bosom the passion which destroyed
 my repose. This is the first moment
 I could summon resolution to ascertain
 my fate. Miss Arundel has
 condescended to receive my vows;
 and do you, my respectable friend,
 crown our felicity, by blessing us
 together!" At the same moment he
 placed the cold and passive hand of
 his Alicia, who was near fainting
 with excess of agitation, in that of
 the good rector; who, from many
 recollections which crowded fast on
 his memory, and nearly overpowered
 his feelings with paternal fondness,
 regarded both his interesting *élèves*;
 and, after a moment's silence, he
 joined their hands, with a fervent
 L 5 prayer,

the future Countess of Ormington is the adopted child of that Doringfield, whom, for years, she has regarded with sentiments bordering on hatred. Besides, at present, Alicia must appear to her without those advantages of birth and fortune to which she has an undoubted right; but which, when explained to her Ladyship, will only, I fear, serve to increase her aversion to that union, the completion of which, I doubt not, will secure to this precious pledge of friendship all the felicity this world can bestow.

The sanguine Henry would not, at a moment so auspicious, give entrance

trance to one painful idea; he thanked
 his tutor with all the warmth of
 genuine gratitude; and the affection-
 ate Alicia pressed to her lips that hand
 which had joined her own with
 Henry's. After some time passed
 in the most delicious manner, Mr.
 Neville tore himself from the idol
 of his soul, and hastened to join his
 two friends who were in the house
 with Lavinia and her mother.
 Alicia continued to walk with the
 kind-hearted Doringfield, to whom
 she recounted all that had passed in
 her morning interview; and while
 dwelling with enthusiastic praise on
 the virtues of Henry, he raised his
 eyes to Heaven, and with uplifted
 hands

hands exclaimed, "Oh, Providence! this is indeed one of those few, but striking instances of retribution, which in thy wisdom is sometimes visible to thy blind creatures. Oh! that thou wouldst also convert the hearts of others to thy divine will, and confirm the happiness of these beloved children!"—"My dear Mr. Doringfield," replied Alicia, "tell me freely without disguise, you who have known us both from infancy, do you suppose this passion will contribute to the mutual felicity of both?"—"Yes, my dearest girl, it is my firm belief, because your principles are the same, though under different forms. Neville is generous;

rous;

rous; Alicia thinks nobly: he is well informed; you have a mind capable of appreciating the value of such an understanding: Henry is benevolence itself; the hand and heart of Miss Arundel are ever open to relieve distress: in short, you possess all the gentleness and mild virtues which can soften that vivacity of character which marks our Henry. May Heaven turn the heart of his mother! for, united to him, you cannot fail to possess all the happiness you merit."—"Thank you a thousand times, my kindest friend, for the picture you have drawn; I will treasure it in the inmost recesses of my heart; and I trust and pray I shall

shall ever cultivate those virtues which you flatter me by saying I am already in possession of. I confess to you, I feel an alarm for which I cannot account, at the very idea of the ladies being made acquainted with my future prospects; but while I acknowledge the repugnance with which my soul is filled at their being informed of them, I cannot bear the thought of concealment in so important a point to those whom, from their near connexion with my earliest protector, I ought to consider in the light of friends."—"Your friends!" retorted he, in a tone of doubt and vexation; "ah, my dear child, I greatly fear they are undeserving

undeserving of the regard of a mind so noble, which I well know must feel unhappy at the obligation imposed of present secrecy. But make yourself easy; the time is not far off when all mystery concerning your right to my protection will cease, and I shall have the delight of explaining all which may have appeared ambiguous respecting your situation in my family. On the morning you become of age, from me you shall receive a recital which will fill your gentle breast with sorrow for the woes of your amiable but unfortunate parents; which, as they are now irremediable, I am convinced my Alicia will submit to the knowledge

ledge

ledge of, with that mild resignation which has not a particle of insensibility in it; but is the offspring of a well-regulated mind, resolute in the performance of the severest duties, in spite of all the struggles of inclination and the suggestions of animated affections. I know that your feelings will receive a shock from the communication of intelligence, which, at the expiration of a short time, it will be no longer necessary to keep from your knowledge; but while you weep the woes of your now fainted parents, you will have much cause to admire the infinite wisdom and goodness of that Power who now permits you to look forward,

ward, under the protection of the man you love, to a life of future bliss. Before we break up our conversation," added he, " I must remind you that a failure in point of secrecy at this moment may be the means of involving Mr. Neville and yourself in much perplexity ; so never, my dear, be persuaded to make known his sentiments respecting you till the moment when all is fixed for your immediate marriage. In general, it is the height of imprudence, even if we have no particular reasons for the observance of caution, to communicate our wishes and plans to those who can be noways concerned in them, but from motives
perhaps

perhaps even less justifiable than those of curiosity ; so, my dear, I particularly request you will continue the same conduct to my wife and her daughter as you have ever evinced ; which, I think, has at no time been marked by the unrestrained confidence of friendship on either side."

They now approached the house, and Alicia promising to obey him in every thing, they hastened to join the party assembled within. The ladies appeared in the highest good-humour, as Henry and his friends had proposed calling on the next day but one, to escort them to a review

view about five miles from Ashbourn; the officers intended giving a public breakfast, and the day was to conclude with a cold collation in the field; after which, as the band of the regiment was remarkably fine, a dance with the ladies had been hinted at. Cards of invitation had been sent to Bellevue, requesting the attendance of that family and their friends: the proposal was too congenial to the wishes of the party to be refused.

Mrs. Doringfield would on many accounts have preferred Henry as her son-in-law; but not fully convinced as to the nature of his intentions respecting Lavinia, she had, from
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the first introduction of Sir Granby Darcy at the parsonage, received him with every flattering mark of that distinguished politeness which could induce him to believe he was a most welcome visitor; thinking it impossible he could contemplate the graces of her child's person with indifference: nor, in this instance, did she judge too partially; for, in a short time, he expressed himself in such high-flown terms of admiration, as were a convincing proof the full splendour of Lavinia's beauty had made the desired impression on his heart. Henry and Fortescue both beheld the snare into which he was likely to fall; but honour and delicacy forbade their

their

their interposing in an affair in which he was certainly the most proper judge. Unfortunately for himself, he was the most likely kind of man in the world to be practised upon successfully by the arts of a designing mother, and by the blandishments of a fordid beauty, who could at pleasure wear the fascinating smile of good-humour, and who appeared the most guileless of all human beings. Indeed, nothing could excel her in exterior loveliness ; for the loves and the graces played round her captivating figure ; and if it be in the most powerful attractions to excuse the blindness of love, Sir Granby Darcy had that apology to make, for

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yielding

yielding himself up with precipitancy to the ardour of affection; for the radiant glance of her sparkling black eyes conjured up all the passions into a tumult, inflamed the heart, and silenced the understanding.

Mrs. Doringfield observed, without appearing to do so, her daughter's victory over the infatuated Sir Granby, with triumphant satisfaction, determining to procure a handsome settlement for her idolized child. The Baronet was liberal to a fault, and never thought of the value of wealth but as it assisted him to procure whatever at the moment he thought necessary to his happiness. He was

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now too deeply enamoured, to detect the mercenary views of the mother. Hoodwinked as he was by the well-affected tenderness of the daughter, he now determined to disclose himself in form to the family at the parsonage. He thought the day appointed to be spent at the review would give him the wished-for opportunity to carry into execution his project. It was a moment which was expected with impatience by her, who, through his means, would break with splendour on a world, which she had long sighed to dazzle with her transcendant beauty, and to receive in the busy haunts of men the homage she was prepared

by a fond mother to expect, whenever fate should put it in her power to shine in those circles in which, from infancy, she had been taught to expect a splendid establishment.

After the gentlemen had bid them adieu, nothing was talked of but the intended excursion ; which even to the happy Alicia afforded delight inexpressible, because, for many hours, she should enjoy the society of him whose presence would render every place a paradise. To the devoted heart of Alicia, Henry's rank and future expectations had little charms ; for, young and inexperienced, she had no conception of those ills in which pecuniary embarrassments too often plunge

plunge the unwary ; and had he been penniless, and she the mistress of the universe, she would joyfully have resigned it all to have shared his poverty ; nor have bestowed one thought on the means of procuring the common necessities of life, while blessed with that tender affection she regarded as the chief charm of existence ; and deprived of which, she felt convinced, life would become a burden she would gladly resign.

Mrs. Doringfield was eager to behold her daughter shine with more than her usual splendour, on that day when she was to be introduced to

the elegant circle, who were invited to attend the breakfast; she doubted not she should have the felicity of beholding the idol of her heart, the sole and unrivalled object of undivided attention; and in this pleasing expectation even Alicia came in for a portion of that good-humour, the hope of soon realizing her favourite scheme by the marriage of her daughter gave birth to; for she wisely determined it would be the most prudent method of proceeding to grasp at the first opportunity that occurred, whether it were presented by Henry Neville or Sir Granby Darcy. Should it be the latter, she had already concerted a plan by which

she

she trusted speedily to end any engagement between Miss Arundel and Henry : this she now more than suspected to be the case, from the language so legible in the eyes of both when encountering each other. It had been for some time her constant study to observe them with all the malignancy of a fiend, who watched but to destroy.

As the drudgery of villany is despicable, so also is it constant ; the head and the hands are perpetually employed ; when one web is finished another is begun ; the very rest of villany is only variety of labour. Wolves and other beasts of prey,

when they have feasted, are quiet till the return of appetite : but villany never lies down ; it is ever hungry and hunting ; it starts at every new appearance ; it is always waking and solicitous for fear of surprize ; it has a great many tools to work with, nor is it easily baffled ; if deceit makes for its purpose, it is used with skill ; no affairs in church, in state, in public or domestic happiness, are too much for its compass ; it receives all mischievous impressions, and runs into any mould the hand of power holds up ; it is a most obliging leveller, it mingles the great and small with wonderful condescension ; it will solicit employment, submit to infamous

infamous disguise, and engage in the most scandalous intrigues ; it is made too much use of in this world, and is the very worst companion we can take with us to another. Notwithstanding such reflections must suggest themselves to every mind not absolutely base, Mrs. Doringfield determined nothing should deprive her of the revenge she meditated on a house, by a part of which one of her family had been dishonoured ; and she languished for an opportunity of gratifying this meanest and most despicable of all the passions to which human nature is liable.

The next morning Mrs. Doringfield received a note from the friends at Bellevue, inquiring after the health of the ladies, and fixing the hour at which, on the following day, they would come in carriages, and attend them to the field of action. Lavinia was transported with joy at this mark of attention from Mr. Neville, which she set down entirely to her own account ; for, though piqued at his too visible admiration of Alicia, to whom, even in the trial of concealing his intentions; he had only manifested his attachment ; yet had she cherished a flame in her bosom, which consumed her ; and

jealousy

jealousy was at times added to the torments of doubt respecting his designs. Doting to distraction on the graceful negligence of Neville, who would not understand the many hints she gave him of her passion, and stung to the soul with envy and disappointment, she determined on vengeance. To blast the opening views of Alicia, she would have employed the whole stock of that artifice which from infancy she had practised. On all occasions, she manifested the most marked attention to Henry, by that means hoping to gratify his vanity; but far from receiving pleasure from what would

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have

have flattered the self-love of most men, he felt a secret horror at both Lavinia and her mother, for which he could by no means account : they had lately become to him objects of aversion ; though, as the wife and daughter of his much respected and highly esteemed friend, he continued to treat them with that degree of attention which men of the world indiscriminately pay to all who have claims on their politeness.

Alicia, vexed at the misconception which had occasioned such exultation and triumph as was painted on the countenance of both ladies, cast a look of sorrow at Mr. Doringfield.

Her

Her gentle nature could not behold with satisfaction the error into which they had fallen ; one led by maternal love, the other by consummate vanity ; and it struck her as ungenerous to be accessory, by her silence, to their future disappointment, when they should become acquainted with the full extent of her happy prospects. The emotions of her mind, ever visible in her varying and expressive countenance, were attributed by the mother and daughter to the jealousy excited by the very marked attentions which Henry had paid to them ; for, blinded by conceit, they did not at the moment suspect their fair inmate

to have had any share in such civilities.

Shortly after the arrival of the message, Miss Arundel, with the little Lydia in her hand, rambled into the garden, where John, the old and faithful servant of Doringfield, followed, and delivered a packet which the groom had brought from Bellevue, together with a note for Mr. Doringfield. Its contents were the transcripts of that tenderness the passions ever bear when directed towards a virtuous and honourable object. Born to feel exquisitely, and to express that feeling with more than common energy, the restraints
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of early implanted rectitude could only withhold him from the wild and dangerous extremes into which its ebullitions might have hurried him, had he not been guided by every sentiment which delicacy could inspire. He now addressed his destined bride in terms of the most affectionate regard ; informing her, that on their return to Bellevue the evening of that day on which his happiness had been confirmed, he found his aunt and cousin, to whom, as well as to his friend Fortescue, he communicated his expected bliss ; they, he confessed, had at first expressed their fears respecting the difficulties which might arise from
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the prejudices of his mother ; “ but,” added he, “ I soon convinced my amiable friends, that I would admit of no other arbitrator than my own heart, which had decided for me ; nor shall the decision it has formed be amenable to any authority whatever. Since honour and your virtues have sanctioned it, neither my mother, nor the world, shall be the judges of what is to constitute my happiness ; for to live without you, I swear by every sacred power, I will never consent to do ! No, my adored love, the holy marriage vow shall immediately unite our fortunes and our lives. Lady Cecilia and her daughter will be at the breakfast, where
I shall

I shall have the felicity of making known to each other those so dear to me." He ended by congratulating himself on the fortunate event which would thus give him the means of bringing them together, without raising the suspicions of Mrs. Doringfield or her daughter: a visit from his aunt to the parsonage would unavoidably have done so.

On beholding, under the hand of her lover, such repeated, such tender assurances of his ardent passion, an universal trepidation seized her; the blood forsook her cheek, and again deeply dyed it with a crimson suffusion. Lydia, with all the curiosity
so

so natural to her age, was eager to know whence that long, long letter came : and why it made her dear Alicia weep ? for the transports of joy and gratitude had caused the pearly drops to burst unbidden from her soft eyes at this tender confirmation of all her hopes ; at the near prospect of the glowing picture of felicity which her imagination had painted, when she should become the wife of her adored Neville. Fortunately, he had enclosed a song that he had borrowed some days before, and this was a sufficient explanation to the innocent child respecting the purport of the letter : as to the agitation so visible in her manner, she

she imputed it to faintness, which had at the moment overpowered her.

This information quieted the inquiries of the little girl, who requested, that, when quite well, she would sing to her the pretty song Mr. Neville had sent back. This desire was speedily complied with; and never had her voice expressed so much tenderness, as when giving utterance to the words conveyed to her by him, who, in her opinion, gave an indescribable value to the most trifling event in which he was concerned.

“ You must never, dearest Miss Arundel,” cried the sweet prattler, flinging her little arms around her neck, and pressing her ruby lips on
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the soft cheek of her lovely companion, " indeed you never must sing that song to Lavinia."—" Why not, my love? You express pleasure at having heard it, and I think it is charming."—" That is the very reason why I should be sorry if you were to sing it to her; because I heard her the other day laugh at you while playing on the harp and singing to it."

Alicia felt, that by questioning the child she should be giving her an improper example, and therefore only replied, " I suppose, my love, that Miss Dormer was engaged in some occupation, which the noise I
made

made must have interrupted; for you know I am often obliged to check my Lydia, when, during her play, she raises her voice beyond its natural soft tone, and by that means interrupts my studies."—"But," replied the penetrating Lydia, "that was not the case; for she was not doing any thing but talking to grandmamma about a new hat she had bought at Derby; and you were in the little drawing-room, and could not have disturbed her; and I was wicked enough to cry, as I stood on the chair by the window, 'Dear me! if here is not Mr. Neville! How I wish he could come before Alicia has finished that sweet song!' And if he had

had done so, I well knew it would vex them, because Lavinia cannot bear any body should be praised but herself; and he does so love you, Miss Arundel, that one would have thought you had heard what Lavinia said, for you instantly put by your harp, and went into the garden."

Alicia kissed the playful girl with affection, and felt the necessity of caution in the presence of children; and how guarded ought to be the actions of those who have charge of them, that by example all impropriety should be kept from the observation of the infant mind, which, like a mirror, reflects the dispositions
and

and principles of those who are oftenest in its view.

Lydia now began to dance about the garden with sylphlike grace, and left Alicia to contemplate the happiness she had in view ; but not long was she left at liberty to think without interruption, for her playful little favourite, skipping towards her, exclaimed, "To-morrow you will dance with my dear Mr. Neville ; will you not ? I hope he won't dance with my aunt, or grandmamma."

Alicia, smiling at the last supposition, replied, "I know not, my love, whether I shall be so honoured."

She blushed at the idea of being
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the distinguished object of regard to him whose amiable qualities secured even the affection of infants. Lydia remained silent for a moment; then putting her little arm within that of her beloved Alicia, she looked at her with an air of surprise, saying, "What makes you so red, and look so serious?"—"Ah!" thought she, "if the sensations of my heart are so visible even to this little creature, what will they not explain to more penetrating observers?" To amuse the attention of the child, she told her, if she would be very good, having half an hour to spare, she would repeat a little allegory she had been reading. The child with eagerness requested her

her to begin, which she did as follows :

THE ISLAND OF VANITY.

IT has been observed, that the scenes which pass before our eyes in the day, generally make so great an impression on our memories, that they are again renewed by sleep ; and as fancy is then most busy, she often introduces a thousand wild chimeras to direct our minds, which always must have some subjects to employ them.

The

The sun was sinking into the sea, and painting the landscape, when I walked out to enjoy the different beauties that continually met my eyes ; the soft zephyrs played on the trembling leaves, whilst the lofty trees waved their applauding heads at the music of their tuneful inhabitants ; all was serene around me, and even Silence herself seemed to listen ; the air was perfumed with opening blossoms ; the sheep were skipping with delight on the hills, which were spread with a carpet of the finest green, and shaded by the sun with its gayest colours.

I was

I was now come in sight of the ocean, which shone with inexpressible lustre at the reflection of that glorious orb, the beams of which dancing on the waves diffused tints that the hand of Titian could not equal; that boisterous element was sunk into a calm, and, like the smiles of an artful flatterer, pleased.

The nightingale now called loudly on the solemn night to listen to her plaintive song; at the music of her voice the light gave way to shade, and I retired to sleep, where fancy presented me with the following dream:

She brought me to the shore I had just left, which was covered with multitudes of different nations thronging with eagerness to embark in ships that floated near the banks. Their leader was a beautiful young man, who bore in his hand an ensign of various colours; he waved it high in air, and advanced to meet me: my feet imperceptibly moved towards him, and when he addressed me, my attention to all but him was suspended. I asked him where he was going to conduct the troops I saw: he answered me in a voice that had all the charms of music, " That curiosity had collected them as adventurers

turers on board the fleet bound to the Island of Vanity. His followers were encouraged to proceed by the Goddess that presided over it, who had promised to distinguish them with particular favours, she having the power of making her votaries pleased with themselves, and bestowing the appearance of merit where it was least to be found. I am," continued he, "the High Priest of Vanity, acquainted with her mysteries, and highly honoured by her. Suffer me to introduce you to her presence, and make you a witness of her glory; a glory that far transcends your imagination, and whose rays will gild all your actions.

Deliberate not, but follow me; I will raise you above the vulgar, and lead you to the Temple of Pleasure, where Misery never enters, and where the groans of the unfortunate are not heard."

Won by his persuasive eloquence, I gave him my willing hand, and already imagined myself near the possession of those honours: he threw a robe over me, that made me appear lovely in my own eyes, and turned them from every object but self.

As soon as we set our feet on the deck, the sails were puffed out with the

the breath of Flattery, who sung our praises in strains so melodious, and kept our attention so much engaged by the syren music, that danger in vain threatened. At length we were dreadfully alarmed by the ship's splitting on an unseen rock; I was plunged by Flattery into the roaring deep, and dashed against the rocks of Misfortune. In the midst of my distress, whilst my soul was struggling to discharge itself into the great abyss, a powerful arm snatched me from the waves that were mounting over my head, and bore me to the land.

The first object I saw was my preserver ; she was clad in the garb of plainness, and bore the appearance of austerity. She told me she would be my companion, and guard me from future evils, if I would attend to her precepts, and keep them. Gratitude made me readily promise her. She immediately divested me of the robe that Flattery, under the pretence of friendship, had given me ; and which, when taken off, fell into dust : at the same time she held a mirror before my eyes, that discovered to me my own imperfections. I was visibly shocked to find a mind full of blots, which I
had

had hitherto mistaken for virtues ; but was comforted by my directress's saying she would wipe them out, and keep Flattery from having any influence over me ; as he was the original of those faults, by giving me that robe which had in it such a subtle venom, that even Virtue herself could with difficulty resist it.

“ Take this shield,” said she ; “ it will guard you against the harpies that continually walk the island to devour the unwary stranger.

“ Observe the companions of your voyage, that are now landing from their rotten ships ; true, they have escaped the rock you split on, but

here their hopes, elate and full, serve only to make them the slaves of Passion: in vain they seek for Happiness; they will pursue an imaginary being, who assumes her form, and mocks their hopes."

Whilst she was speaking, my ears caught every word, and gave a pleasure that I had never before known; the frown that at my first acquaintance with her sat on her face, now gave way to a placid serenity. I looked on Flattery, who was advancing towards me, with detestation; he attended a figure so tall, that his head seemed lost in the clouds, who trampled on the poor wretches

wretches that Misfortune continually threw under his feet; their groans were music to his ears, my seducer representing to him that their miseries made him greater, and that he was now sole emperor. He often stooped to hear his own praises, stalked with mock majesty, and decked himself with the rich robes that his slaves had presented to him. Of those he had a train extremely numerous; Ambition, Avarice, Envy, and Insult, led them on; Envy held in his hand a poisoned dart; the monster was worn to a skeleton; and had a fierceness in his countenance that blasted every thing he looked on; his skin was livid and wrinkled,

and his eyes green, which he constantly glanced on Merit, whom he pursued; against her his darts were directed. When she was so unhappy as to suffer from him, the wound was soon healed by Innocence, who bore her armour. The meagre wretch dipped his arrows in poison that flowed from his heart; he often shot them at his master, whom they always deeply wounded, but then recoiled on the sly archer with redoubled force. Close at the side of Envy stood Scandal with her mouth open, and Hypocrisy with the face of a Janus. Avarice was busy in collecting from the ruins that Pride had thrown down. Insult followed

lowed his steps; he held a large glass to the miserable, that reflected on them their former happiness, and their present misfortune.

I now turned my eyes to look on my conductress, and was surprised at the light that flashed from her face, which was the most beautiful that fancy can imagine; her eye, bright as the sun in its meridian glory, and penetrating as that enlivening ray, shone full upon me, and convinced me of my inferiority with reverential awe. I bent my knees; she raised me from the ground, and with a smile that cheered my droop-

ing spirit, thus addressed herself to me :

“ Listen to the voice of Truth, and let my words sink deep in thy heart ; so will I guard thy innocence from the snares laid for it, and bring you to Happiness, for with her I dwell. Fly from Error, that deceiver of the senses, and let Reason be thy guide ; he shall shew you by my light the true face of every thing you look on.”

She then presented me to a venerable old man, who slowly approached towards me ; he received
me

me with the most engaging sweetness, and immediately became the cheerful and instructive companion. Age had not furrowed his brow, but only given a solemnity to his aspect, which beamed forth rays of the Divinity. He was tall and majestic; his silver locks commanded my veneration, while his discourse, which was pure and sublime, sounded in my ears sweeter than the shepherd's flute in the valley of Echo. He led my thoughts through the beauties of the creation up to the Creator; taught me the loveliness of Virtue, and bid me partake of pleasures brought to us by Innocence.

His

His looks drew audience and attention still as night or summer's noon-tide air, while thus he spoke :

“ How wretched are that part of mankind that will not see me through the optics of Truth ! In vain to them are the grateful vicissitudes of the seasons ; they feel no joy when the earth breaks from the prison of Winter, and shoots at the presence of the enlivening sun ; in vain kind Zephyr scatters perfumes, and opens the blushing rose, who comes attended by her lovely family of flowers, whose beauties are unnoticed, unenjoyed : the grateful songs of the little warblers are disregarded ; in
vain

vain to them does every grove resound
 with thrilling music ; even the noise
 of vast rivers rushing from the ice-
 bound climes is lost on their ears ;
 the yellow harvest comes followed
 by Autumn with her purple fruits,
 and those they are sent to, receive
 their gifts with ingratitude. I strug-
 gle to awaken them from their le-
 thargy ; the Passions oppose me, and
 endeavour at my banishment : with
 them I hold a continual war ; they
 are the subjects of that king whose
 viceroy I am :

But apt they are to rove uncheck'd,
 And of their roving is no end.

When

When assisted by Time or Misfortune, I sometimes conquer, and then find them useful and noble."

His words here ended ; but his meek aspect silent yet spake. Truth now touched me with her wand, and bid me look forward, which I did, and discovered a large plain ; through it ran a river with great impetuosity, whose banks were enamelled with flowers ; it meandered and branched itself out into several streams, that all terminated at palaces, the residence of kings tributary to a mighty power called Vice ; who had his dwelling in a dark cavern at the head of the
river.

river. Crimes thick as autumnal leaves issued from it, and assumed what shapes they pleased ; sometimes they appeared in the form of Religion, and under that disguise committed vast ravages among the ignorant, they not knowing the hypocrite from the heaven-born maid, who always comes attended by Patience and Cheerfulness ; but instead of those, the fiend carried with him Severity, who bore a whip of scorpions. False Pleasure was the comfort of Vice, and ruled his subjects with despotic sway : her garments were loose to the winds, her face painted, and her looks alluring ; she led crowds of unhappy youths to his cave.

cave. At their entrance into that horrid place an universal trembling seized them, Conscience representing to them their danger. Some few, awakened by her, turned back, and joined the side of Reason, who continually harangued the multitude in the cause of Virtue, whose kingdom was in danger of being entirely taken from her by Vice, he every day gaining great advantages. The fiend, who used to hide himself in darkness, now stalked abroad in open day : his appearance at first shocked the multitude, and Nature, affrighted, felt convulsions ; yet soon the monster grew familiar, and Custom introduced his subjects to him. He
grinned

grinned a ghastly smile to find his endeavours successful, and consigned them over to Misery, whom he ordered to put on the dress of Happiness, the more effectually to deceive. Reason he attempted to banish, whom he looked on as the support of Virtue, and his greatest foe ; but who still would return, and snatch considerable numbers from impending destruction.

I now looked towards the cavern of Vice, and perceived those I had before seen enter, coming out of it. Impudence led them forth, whose forehead was brass, on which his name was engraven in capital letters.

Their

Their minds, which were now opened to my view, were filled with the most dreadful reflections. Conscience, whom they had endeavoured to lull asleep, and leave behind them, as she had proved an uneasy companion, was roused by their crimes, and lashed them with her everlasting whip. Despair at the same time (a worn-out skeleton with haggard looks) presented to them a dagger dipped in blood. Just as these wretches were sinking under the scourge of the one, and were eagerly grasping at the bloody offering of the other, Religion interposed with a smile of peace, and carried those who were followed by Repentance over

to

to the side of Reason, under whose banner they enlisted.

Those that would not hearken to the music of his voice embarked to sail down the streams of Pleasure; their boats had neither rudders nor oars, and were the sport of the Passions, who often raised violent tempests; and hurled the unhappy adventurers down a fatal eddy; where they sunk to rise no more. False Pleasure, whom they still pursued, raised delusions, that mocked their airy hopes, and led them on to destruction. While I was thus observing the floating and sinking wrecks, and the gay bubbles that so soon disappeared,

disappeared, the army of Vice approached me.

Riot led on the sons of Rapine, and all was anarchy and confusion; my ears were assaulted by a noise resembling that of thunder, and at the same moment my hand was seized by a power named Error, who conveyed me away from Truth and Reason: he raised a mist before my eyes, that darkened my senses, and led me into mazes which he called the Labyrinth of Pleasure: here I soon forgot Truth, and was charmed with Error, who raised before me a magnificent structure, whose riches gave a light that shone through the dark-

ness that furrounded me. I immediately exclaimed, " How beautiful is the Temple of Vanity ! happy are her worshippers ; I will no longer live excluded from her presence ! " I had no sooner spoke, than I was lifted into the air, which was filled with perfumes that played round my senses, and my head turned giddy as I drew near the Temple, where ten thousand doors were thrown open for the reception of all that would enter. Millions were pressing forward, elate with self-sufficiency, and conducted by Sophistry, who, with magic words, enchanted those who listened to him. I was hurried on without knowing whither my steps would

would tend. The ascent to the hill on which Vanity resided was imperceptible to me, and I immediately rushed into her presence.

Description cannot reach, or imagination paint, the beauties that presented themselves to my view at my entrance into the dome: the bowels of the earth had been tortured to give up its glorious mischief, which gilded the pillars of this fabric, whose walls were hung with looking-glasses. Here the ugly saw themselves through the mirror of Flattery, and mistook the handsome face he shewed them for their own: he bowed and smiled in the most obsequious manner,

manner, adapted his compliments to the inclinations of all he conversed with, and told them their merits would certainly be rewarded. Every one seemed pleased with his acquaintance, and imagined their worth had gained them that honour.

Folly stood on tip-toe in the midst of the assembly, fond of being conspicuous; he addressed his discourse to a group of females that had gathered round him, who shewed their admiration at his dress and behaviour by their loud applauses.

The Goddess, high seated on the trophies which Pride had thrown

under her feet, unveiled her charms, and commanded our homage. This daughter of Lucifer shared his power and possessed his riches. Art and Affectation governed all her actions; Flattery bowed before her, while Pride was seated at her right hand: he wore a coat of armour, on which the word *Honour* was entirely blotted out, and in its place were substituted Ostentation, Contempt, Cruelty. Avarice and Envy were his counsellors; they too were his generals, and led his armies to the field; numbers of those he had conquered, seduced first by Flattery, lay under his feet, whilst he continually spurned them from him; but as every person

was

was busy in contemplating his own imaginary perfections, the miseries of those unhappy wretches were unobserved, and would have been by me, had not Misfortune touched me, and brought me the shield of Truth, which I had dropped in the confusion Error had caused. As it was tempered with heavenly steel, whose bright lustre made every Virtue and every Vice conspicuous, I immediately discovered among the multitude those that were at first pushed on by Emulation and the love of the former ; but having risen to a height where Humility could not keep pace with them, their feet slipped, and

• they fell far beneath the lowest class of mortals ; yet being puffed up by Vain-glory they still pretended to give laws to the world, and, though mad and blind, called themselves leaders and directors.

Shocked to find that human nature has often a cloud thrown over it, and the fatal consequences of soaring too high, I hastily turned my eyes on a young woman, who stepped forward in all the pride of youth and beauty ; she moved with an easy grace and conscious dignity, but on Flattery's whispering her, and giving her his hand to lead her

to the Goddess, she tossed her head, and tripping before with an air of assurance, seated herself where she might receive the adorations of the whole assembly.

Just as I was admiring such an assemblage of charms, Truth entered the Temple, and in an unclouded blaze of light shone full in our faces. All were at that moment divested of disguise; all started back at her presence. Beauty had already suffered by the rude hands of Affectation: he had distorted her features, and taken the rosy blush of innocence from her cheek. She would have retreated,

but found it too late ; Detraction trod on her white robe, and pulled her to the ground ; in vain she attempted to disengage herself from his gripe ; the fiend was not to be baffled.

On a sudden I heard a violent noise at the entrance of the Temple ; I looked that way, and beheld a ghastly group of figures entering ; Poverty hung with rags, and Hunger her companion, drove all before them ; distreffes of various kinds brought up the rear, and Death closed it in his most horrible form. At the sight of Poverty, Vanity
fainted

fainted away, and Pride left the Temple, carrying with him his treasure. Death pursued and tumbled him into a horrible pit with his slave Envy, who continually torments him ; the ornaments of Vanity were changed into dust, and blew off with every wind ; her face, wrinkled and ugly, shocked the eyes of the beholders. Soon as she recovered she fled to a neighbouring shore ; Slavery followed her, rattling his chains.

The mist raised by Error was now dispersed, and the whole building vanished into air, not the least traces of it remaining. Death, after having
conquered

conquered the foes of Virtue, put on the form of an angel; bright yet awful was his countenance, and in his hand he held a key, with which he pointed to those gates of glory which he, and only he, was commissioned to open. I looked up, and saw Wisdom descending: as she drew near the earth, it gave signs of gratulation; every hill seemed more exalted, the fields smiled with fresher verdure, the flowers glowed with reanimated colours, while Liberty unmolested proclaimed her approach; the birds in wild melody singing her praises, which every wood, every valley re-echoed.

Truth,

Truth, whose radiant beams pierce into the lowest cottages and darkest caverns, brought into the presence of Wisdom depressed Merit, who had been driven from society, and followed by Misfortune; he had made her pillow hard, strewed her path with thorns, and ministered to her a cup of bitterness. Wisdom at one glance dispelled her fears, brightened her aspect, and bestowed on her celestial beauty: she saw through the perspective of Hope the reward of all her sufferings, and, transported at the sight, she exclaimed, "O great source of light! parent of good! how can I deserve the glory that awaits me?"

me? Welcome Affliction, nurse of Humility, who hast sown the seeds of Virtue in my soul; with gratitude I thank thee; still let thy lessons be imprinted on my mind; but let not the horror of thy countenance again affright me."

While Merit was speaking, Affliction vanished, and Content came tripping over the plain: cheerful health bloomed on her face, flowers sprung under her feet, her robe was green, her food herbs, and the crystal stream her drink. I was in raptures at the beautiful objects around me, and observing Innocence bringing to
me

me a robe of pure white, I advanced to meet her : Truth smiling on me at that moment brighter than I had ever before seen, the blaze of light was so full on my eyes, that I awaked.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.







